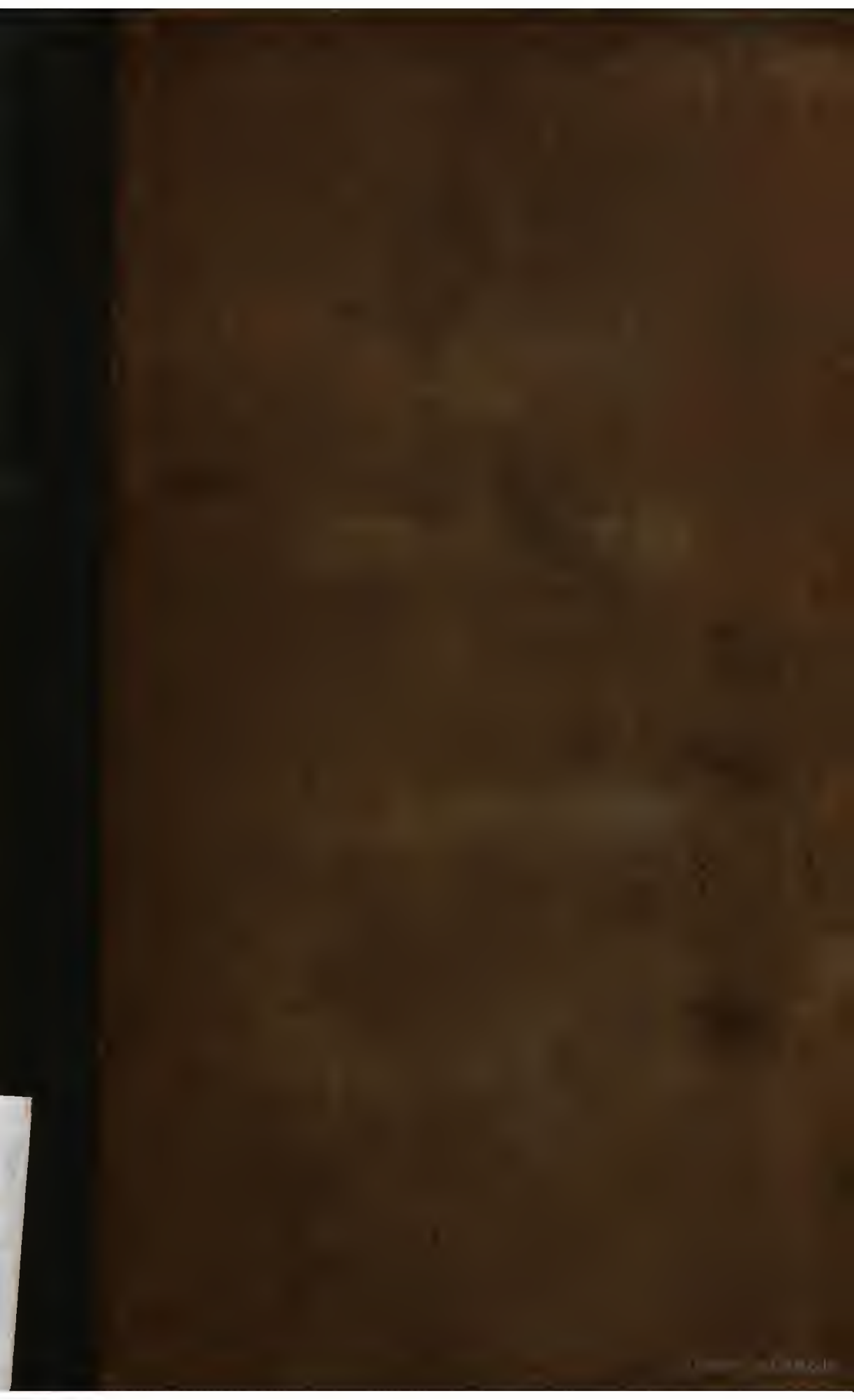

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Harold Wilberforce-Bell.

CALABRIA

DURING A MILITARY RESIDENCE

OF

THREE YEARS:

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS,

BY

A GENERAL OFFICER OF THE FRENCH ARMY.

FROM THE ORIGINAL MS.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

CALABRIA has hitherto been regarded as the *terra incognita* of modern Europe. That spirit of enterprise which has carried the adventurous traveller to the most remote and inhospitable parts of the globe, has here met with obstacles which it could never overcome. The local difficulties of the country, though most formidable, are still but as nothing compared with the savage and ferocious character of the inhabitants. The man whose resolution would disdain such impediments as raging torrents, trackless woods, and horrid mountains that seem to defy his intrepidity—the man who would cheerfully endure any privations however severe while exploring a country that presents to his view the most extraordinary objects

of interest, both ancient and modern, would yet shrink in dismay on reflecting that at every step he took he inevitably exposed himself to the deadly rifle of the lurking brigand, whose pursuit is plunder, whose sport is blood.

It is not too much to say, that the only accurate and authentic account of Calabria now extant, will be found in the following most interesting Letters. They proceed from the pen of a distinguished French Officer, who, while serving with his battalion within the wild precincts of the Apennines, and before he had yet risen to a high rank in his profession, kept up a regular correspondence with his father. The period to which they refer, comprising a space of three years, is one of the most eventful, not only in the history of Europe, but of the world. At that period Napoleon was in the zenith of his lawless power, the whole of Italy from one end to the other

was in the military occupation of the French, and Joseph was on the point of quitting Naples for a brief and disastrous sovereignty in Spain, leaving behind him a vacant throne for his brother-in-law, Joachim Murat. The author, while incidentally adverting to these events, speaks of Great Britain in the spirit of a hostile opponent; yet his details cannot fail to interest the English reader, particularly those respecting the battle of Maida, or the battle of St. Euphemia, as he calls it.

But the great merit of the present work is the faithful and graphic description it gives of a region almost unknown in modern times, though pre-eminently celebrated in the classical pages of antiquity—a region which is the most beautifully romantic and wildly picturesque of any on the whole European Continent —a region which, in the emphatic words of the author, "would be a perfect Paradise if it was not inhabited by demons."

The career of arms in which he was engaged, afforded him facilities of traversing the country in all directions, and he has suffered nothing whatever to escape his notice. He has vividly sketched every city, town, village, and hamlet, from Naples to Reggio, and thence in a transverse line to the murderous gorge of Orsomarzo, where several of his party were massacred by a horde of bandits, while he himself owed his safety only to those efforts which result from the last extremity of despair.

The Translator would now only observe, that the Letters here presented to the public are consecutively taken from a very voluminous correspondence, and his great object has been to preserve the spirit and force of the originals, without the slightest attempt at extraneous embellishment.

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CALABRIA.

LETTER I.

Arrival at Naples.—Appearance of that City.—Departure for Calabria.

Naples, Nov. 20, 1807.

My former Letters could but very imperfectly express the sensations which crowded upon me as I traversed the fertile plains of Italy; still less can I attempt to pourtray the emotions which I experience in the great city of Naples, where we have arrived within the last four days. Its situation—its climate—its Vesuvius, which commands the finest bay in the world—its grand well-paved streets—its terrace-covered houses—its vast and

varied objects of attraction—its appearance, alternately delightful and terrible—all tend to charm the sense and exalt the imagination. Here every thing is in motion, as compared with the other great towns of Italy, particularly Rome, whose inhabitants seem like so many shades wandering in the midst of ancient monuments of genius and of art.

The first autumnal rains have ceased, and we now enjoy a temperature which is inexpressibly fine. The inhabitants of all classes seem to give themselves up to pleasure. They are to be seen crowding the streets, the quays, and other public places, but particularly the Toledo, which is the grandest street I have ever beheld. The immense population which congregates incessantly—the numberless coaches and carriages of every kind—together with the crowds of pedestrians that are continually in motion, give to this city a

greater appearance of bustle than is to be found in any quarter of Paris. On all sides are to be seen jugglers, punches, and quacks; and if, in the midst of this motley assemblage of mountebanks, the whim should seize any fellow to harangue the multitude, he instantly places himself upon a barrel or the first convenient rostrum that comes in his way. The people crowd around him, and the orator gesticulating like one possessed, improvises at random a harangue equally ridiculous as extravagant. This practice, so contrary to our habits, is in the highest degree offensive to our taste.

I shall as speedily as possible finish my period of service as Adjutant-Major, in order to proceed on the campaign with the Commander of my battalion, who is my most particular friend. It would at least require a month to take a general survey of this city, and its beautiful en-

virons, which formed the delight of the ancient Romans, and which the brilliant fictions of the Eneid have for ever rendered celebrated. Yes, it would assuredly require more than a month, and I have only two days longer to remain here. A fatal order drags me away from this charming abode, and carries our battalion to the wildest and most remote part of the kingdom. We are setting out for Calabria: I am really a good deal disconcerted. I must renounce all my fine projects in order to immure myself in a country the accounts from which are dreadful. Our military exploits are to be confined to the pursuit of brigands, while traversing the wild mountains and forests with which the country is covered, and vegetating in dismal villages inhabited by a race of men who are represented to us as savages, perfidious and cruel to the last excess. What a contrast

must not this new situation present to us on quitting the worthy Germans, so free — so hospitable — and, above all, after having taken an active part in such glorious military labours!

Wishing, however, to acquire some better information respecting Calabria than was to be found in reports, which are often exaggerated, I sought for it in vain through all the principal booksellers' shops in this city. I was assured that there did not exist any particular description of this part of Italy. It appears that the fear of banditti, and the extreme difficulty of the roads, have prevented travellers from penetrating into it. I take pleasure, then, in looking upon my entry into Calabria as a voyage of discovery, and which must be attended with great interest. You may expect to receive frequent and long letters from me. This correspondence, which, as an indulgent father, you have so much

encouraged, will afford me a pleasing solace, and become the charm of my leisure hours.

We are ordered off immediately to Cosenza, one of the principal towns of Calabria, whence I shall write to you on my arrival.

LETTER II.

MARCH FROM NAPLES TO CASTELLUCCIO. — FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE BRIGANDS.—DEPLORABLE EVENT.

CASTELLUCCIO, DEC. 1, 1807.

WE left Naples on the 23d of November, in fine weather, following the line between Vesuvius and the sea—an excellent road, paved with lava. The volcano was calm, the sea tranquil, and a bright unclouded horizon enabled us to descry the distant shores of Sorentum, (the country of Tasso,) and the isles lying at the entrance of the beautiful bay of Naples. In our progress as far as Salerno, we met with a great number of villages, towns, and charming little hamlets, which are so situated, that they seem to unite Salerno with the capital. The country is beau-

tiful; the ashes of Vesuvius give it an incredible fertility, so much so, that its population is prodigious. You can readily conceive the chagrin I must have felt while marching over the lava of Vesuvius, without having it in my power to visit that celebrated volcano; but this excursion, so very interesting, occupies a whole day. I have indemnified myself, however, by running over the ruins of Pompeii. It is difficult to imagine any thing more extraordinarily curious. The spectator is astonished to walk in a Roman town, which the volcanic matter of Vesuvius has concealed and preserved for two thousand years. This perhaps, of all others, is the monument best adapted to furnish us with information respecting the domestic manners and habits of the Romans. I much regretted that time did not permit of my visiting the ruins of Pæstum, situated about ten miles from Eboli.

At a short distance from this latter town we entered the mountains. Their tops were covered with snow. Rain has fallen, and it has not yet ceased. Would it had fallen in torrents to prevent the fatal event which I am now about to communicate to you—an event of which we were almost eye-witnesses, without being able to counteract it.

After having passed the village of Lauria, we came to a lofty mountain called Mount Gualdo. Just as we had nearly reached its summit, we heard some shots of musketry, followed by a still louder discharge. We hastened our march, and soon perceived, in a small plain, some infantry soldiers pursued by a body of brigands, who, upon seeing us, instantly sought refuge in an adjacent wood. Our grenadiers endeavoured in vain to come up with them; and as we advanced, we found in a deep ravine surrounded by thick bushes, seven men,

some of whom still breathed, riddled all over with bullets, and pierced through with the stabs of poniards. They formed part of a detachment, commanded by a serjeant, who was proceeding to Naples, escorting eight mules laden with baggage. This non-commissioned officer told us, that before he entered this cut-throat spot, he sent some men in advance, whom the brigands, lying concealed behind the bushes, suffered to pass, and then suddenly darted forth, discharging at the same time a volley upon the detachment, which our fortunate arrival now preserved from total destruction. What a lesson for all those who, like ourselves, are destined to be engaged in this wretched species of warfare! We carried off our unhappy countrymen to have them interred, and the remainder of the detachment, of which they had formed part, continued its route. Three hours afterwards the battalion arrived at Castelluccio, a large

well-built village, lying about a mile from a place where our march was impeded by a torrent, and which is called Laino. The appearance of the torrent was really frightful. It filled a large valley, and rushed with an astonishing tumult of muddy waters over the huge masses of rock that obstructed its course.

LETTER III.

CONTINUATION OF THE MARCH TO COSENZA. — VIOLENT STORM ENCOUNTERED AT CAMPOTEMESE. — CROSSING THE TORRENT IN THE VALLEY OF CHRATIS.

COSENZA, DEC. 6, 1807.

I CAN easily imagine that nothing but necessity could bring persons to Calabria at this season of the year, when all the elements raging violently would seem to prohibit an entry into it. You may judge of our progress by what follows.

On the morning of the 2nd of December I was directed to ascertain whether the passage of the torrent was practicable. The country people who accompanied me sounded the fordable parts, and assured me that the water had considerably subsided, so that in two hours more we could

pass over in perfect safety. Eventually the battalion got off from this dangerous spot without any accident; but the greatest difficulties yet awaited us. As the torrent had retarded our march, we had yet twenty miles to go before we could reach our provision depôt at Castrovillari, and at this season it is dark before five o'clock. The soldiers who had first crossed over to the other side having dispersed themselves through the village of Rotonda, a good deal of time was necessarily lost in re-mustering them, and then the battalion found itself involved in the defiles of the high mountain, (Campotemese,) the top of which was covered with snow and sleet.

According as we advanced, a hail-storm of the most piercing cold pelted incessantly against our limbs, which were already benumbed from crossing the torrent. The tempest still continued to in-

crease in violence, till, sweeping over the immense plateau which crowned the mountain, it blew a tremendous hurricane, terribly grand and appalling. We were too far advanced to retire. It would, however, have been prudent to return to the village of Rotonda, but we feared that repeated delays on our march might subject us to censure. We advanced, then, with extreme difficulty, struggling against a furious wind, which dashed its sharp, penetrating hail against our faces. Several soldiers, overcome with cold, and whose energies were exhausted, dropped down from faintness, and perished in the midst of the snow, before any assistance could be rendered to them. The near approach of night made our position the more critical. At length, after having struggled for three hours against all the agonies of death, the battalion gained the other side of this direful mountain, whence a rapid descent

brought us speedily to the plain below. Two hours would have been sufficient to bring us to Castrovillari, if a fatal neglect was not destined to increase all the other impediments of this most painful march.

The darkness not permitting us to reconnoitre our course, the officer who preceded the battalion with the sappers got into a wrong route. Deprived of the assistance of our guides, who had made off from us, and of that of the muleteers, who had remained behind with the baggage, the head of the column was led on by torch-light. It was not until we arrived, after a two hours' march, at a farm occupied by a French detachment, that we were apprised of this vexatious mistake. While we were all nearly exhausted from famine and fatigue, still we were obliged to muster fresh strength, in order to gain Castrovillari as speedily as possible, and

we eventually arrived there at eleven o'clock at night. In consequence of the flood not having allowed us to dispatch an advanced guard on the night before for the purpose of securing quarters, we found nothing prepared for our reception. As the commandant of the town formed part of a moveable column that was with the garrison, the guide conducted us to the Mayor, who, seeing our soldiers scatter themselves tumultuously through the different houses, took us for a plague sent from heaven or hell. The whole town was full of bustle and consternation. Nothing was heard but repeated knocks to force in the doors. The night being as dark as pitch, all our efforts to repress this disorder were utterly useless; each individual took up his quarters as he could, and the general fatigue soon restored tranquillity and silence. Most of the officers became the unwelcome guests of the

Mayor, and passed the night in his kitchen, seated round an immense fire. Some bottles of good wine made us soon forget our fatigues, but not the loss of our comrades in arms who had perished in this icy region, and whose number was exaggerated in the sadness of our imagination.

On the following day more than a hundred men were missing at the moment of our departure for Tarzia; a dismal village, the wretchedness of which is daily increased by the continual passing of troops. We sought no more rest than was necessary to refresh us from the fatigues of the preceding day and prepare us for still greater toils the next morning. We had yet thirty miles, or ten French leagues, to march before we could arrive at Cosenza; and moreover the route at this season is almost absolutely impracticable.

The battalion put itself in motion an hour before daylight: it passed over one

torrent, which was so rapid that, notwithstanding every possible precaution, three men, from the violence of the current of the Chratis, (a river which waters the whole valley of Cosenza,) must have inevitably perished, had they not been rescued by some intrepid swimmers. After a two hours' march through plantations of rice, where we sunk exactly half-leg deep, we had still to encounter several pools, quagmires, and new torrents. Every trace of a road or highway having disappeared, impediments nearly insurmountable seemed to increase as we continued to advance; in short, the whole battalion must, I believe, have stuck fast in the mud, if it had not succeeded in making out the fine avenue which leads to Cosenza, where we arrived at nine o'clock at night, in a frightful state.

We were very uneasy about the fate of those men who had remained behind, and

of our baggage: they only arrived after having made a considerable round to avoid the torrents and the marshy swamps of the plain. The officer commanding the escort informed us that the muleteers, declaring their inability to encounter the storm, had pointed out the huts of some charcoal-burners, where the detachment took refuge. The following day, on crossing the mountain, he found twenty-two soldiers of the battalion stretched dead in the snow.

Such is our sad onset in Calabria; it has already given us an ample foretaste of the numberless difficulties which we are to expect. The battalion sets out the day after to-morrow to take up its cantonments in the mountains.

LETTER IV.

ARRIVAL AT ROGLIANO.—POLITICAL AND MILITARY SITUATION OF THE FRENCH IN CALABRIA.—THE BRIGAND CHIEF FRANCATRIPA.

ROGLIANO, DEC. 18, 1807.

Now that we have established our quarters in the villages, I proceed to give you an outline of the localities, and of our political and military situation in Calabria.

Rogliano, situated about five leagues from Cosenza, is built upon an eminence commanding an extremely deep valley, through which the waters of the surrounding mountains sweep along with a terrible tumult. The descent to this abyss is by stairs quite straight, and bordered with precipices, which form the only line of communication between Naples and Reg-

gio from the interior of the country. With such roads it is, indeed, not astonishing that Calabria should remain isolated, —a *terra incognita* to the rest of Europe.

This town has a population of about two thousand souls, with many fine houses, and several rich proprietors. It is celebrated for the goodness of its wine and the salubrity of its climate. We feel the cold very sensibly, and are the more incommoded by it, as the apartments have neither stoves nor chimneys. We are obliged to warm ourselves by means of a fire-pan, in which are burned the husks of the olive, a sort of fuel that diffuses a disagreeable and suffocating odour. I am quartered in one of the best houses of the country. My host is an excellent man, who saved the life of a French officer that was wounded at the battle of St. Euphemia. He had the courage to arrest the fury of the multitude at the very moment they were going to mas-

sacre him, and he took him into his house at the risk of seeing it pillaged and burned. He dressed his wounds and kept him concealed until the return of our troops. Such conduct inspires confidence. This brave and worthy man, who is naturally very communicative, has given me much interesting information respecting the state of the country, and the habits and manners of the people.

Calabria is at this moment occupied by the division of General Regnier, about five thousand strong, dispersed in battalions and companies over the whole extent of the two provinces, for the purpose of keeping open the lines of communication; of observing all the points that are accessible from the sea coast; of holding in obedience a restless and discontented population, and finally, of harassing incessantly the countless bands of brigands that prowl about in all directions. The troops

are not to muster in a body, except in case their common safety may be endangered, either by serious movements in the interior, or by a descent of the English forces, who now occupy Sicily. The practice is for each superior officer to command a territorial district, in which he exercises, according to circumstances, a high, civil, and military police, pursuant to the instructions received from the Generals commanding the provinces, who are themselves subject to the General Commanding-in-Chief, and whose powers are very extensive.

An effort has been made to place the civil authorities upon the same footing as in France; but their influence has been so paralysed by the bad disposition of the inhabitants, that it is impossible to execute any measure without resorting to force: hence all proceedings generally emanate from the military authorities. This mode of conducting affairs is assuredly very bad,

but it is still the only one that can be acted upon in a country which has so long been a prey to disorder, and in which an attempt is made to establish administrative forms, that are quite opposed to all the notions of a people imbued with frightful prejudices, demoralized to the last degree, and totally inaccessible to persuasion.

While abuses of every description must arise from this state of things, yet many of the inhabitants are unanimously of opinion that the French officers carry on public affairs with an uprightness and sagacity which moderate, more or less, the serious inconveniences of such a system of government. The Calabrian families, divided by inveterate feuds, give way to atrocities and perfidies of every kind. The French commanders, in seeking to repress a sanguinary strife which is so much at variance with their own habits, must necessarily produce some advantageous changes.

Moreover, affairs of importance are always submitted to the higher authorities—to men who are generally animated with a desire to improve the condition of a country which the despotism and arbitrary violence of barons have for so long a time held enslaved in ignorance and barbarism.

Our Chief of battalion has the charge of the district of Rogliano, occupied by our companies. All the details of command occasion a multifarious correspondence, which is rendered the more irksome by the eternal complaints of a fierce, impatient, and slanderous people. The first essay of a French officer is exceedingly embarrassing. He finds himself all at once plunged into the midst of vexatious affairs, and that in a wild country, with the language of which he has little or no acquaintance, and in which he is constantly surrounded with snares, malice, and treachery. As I am charged with

the Italian correspondence, I have been daily brought before the judgement-seat. My host has become my interpreter for the jargon of the country, which is to the Italian language that which the *patois* of Provençe is to the French. But an important affair, which more especially comes within military cognizance, engages our earnest attention at the present moment.

There exists in this district a famous chief of brigands named Francatripa, whose atrocities have made him the terror of the whole country. This monster (for he may well be so called) is a native of the environs of Rogliano, where there are several persons who are the objects of his private vengeance, and many of the inhabitants fly to us for protection from his cruelties. The horde of assassins who are under his command, being reinforced by the banditti from Sicily, which

the English frequently disembark upon the coasts, often become formidable by their numbers. The Commandant is especially ordered to destroy them by all the means in his power; but it is now an extremely difficult task. Francatripa, endued by nature with great vigour of body and shrewdness of mind, and being perfectly well acquainted with every part of the canton, besides having a considerable number of partisans in all directions, knows well how to baffle whatever attacks are made upon him. When closely pressed, he retires for the time to a great distance from the scene of his murderous depredations; but so soon as the pursuit is over, he suddenly re-appears, and again carries desolation through the country. Placing himself upon the heights that command the usual lines of communication, he constantly harasses our couriers, in order to get possession of their despatches, which

he sends off to Sicily. His presence keeps the troops in a state of perpetual exertion, the more painful, because it is often attended with no advantageous result. The following particulars will enable you to judge of the perfidious arts to which he is capable of resorting.

In the month of September last a company of Voltigeurs of the 29th regiment of the line, while crossing the high mountains of the Syla to proceed from Catanzaro to Cosenza, was cut off on its march by Francatripa's band. This company lost its way, and just before it arrived at a village called Gli-Parenti, which is the common haunt of brigands, who share their plunder with the inhabitants, Francatripa, fearing to engage in open combat, thought it more advisable to have recourse to an odious stratagem, which succeeded far beyond his expectations. Meeting the company before it en-

tered the village, he represented himself as the commander of the National Guards, and said he came on the part of the Commune to offer refreshments to the troops. The officers of this detachment being unacquainted with the country, accepted the invitation without any distrust, and suffered themselves to be conducted by him to a large mansion, where, confiding in the feigned cordiality of their perfidious hosts, they were improvident enough to cause the arms of the troops to be piled on the ground in front of the door. To inspire the soldiers with a still greater sense of security, Francatripa and his villainous associates pressed them to take with them refreshments for the march; and just at the moment when they were preparing to resign themselves to repose, a pistol-shot fired from a window was the signal for a general massacre. The three officers, seated together in the parlour, were instantly

despatched. A shower of balls from the adjacent houses, and from every approach to the spot, left no point of retreat open to those unfortunate soldiers, of whom not more than seven succeeded in making their escape.

So soon as this melancholy event was known at Cosenza, a very strong detachment was sent off, with orders to burn Gli-Parenti, and put all the inhabitants to the sword; but the brigands had already retired, together with their accomplices, and the village, thus abandoned, became an immediate prey to the flames. This horrible treason, intelligence of which was now promulgated through the whole of Calabria, excited in the French a powerful desire of vengeance against the vile assassins. They have kept at a proper distance ever since our arrival here, but should they again show themselves, we have taken measures to learn all their movements, and to act accordingly.

LETTER V.

EXPEDITION AGAINST FRANCATRIPA.—PICTURESQUE APPEARANCE OF THE COUNTRY.

ROGLIANO, Dec. 28, 1807.

WE have just made our first campaign against the brigand Chief, of whom I spoke in my last letter, and here follows the first bulletin of our grand operations against such contemptible enemies.

On the morning of the 25th instant, I was informed by my host that the scouts of Francatripa had made their appearance in the neighbourhood, and at night we were assured that he himself, and all his *commitive*, (the designation which these bands assume in Calabria,) had arrived at the ruins of the very village of Gli-Pa-

renti, the theatre of his atrocities. The Commandant determined instantly to take him by surprise, and we set off about eight o'clock at night with a detachment of a hundred-and-twenty men, and two confidential guides. Gli-Parenti, situated four leagues from Rogliano, is separated from it by a deep ravine, through which flows a torrent that is always much swollen at this season of the year. To avoid passing near the village, where information of our approach might be given, it was necessary to take a great round, and occupy a certain part of a forest, through which the brigands might probably endeavour to effect their escape. This movement was seconded by a company of the battalion, which had received orders to take up a position by six o'clock in the morning within a short distance of Gli-Parenti, and guard all the outlets on that side. The dawn of day was the moment fixed upon for making

a sudden and unexpected attack, from which a successful result was anticipated.

A cold, but very bright night favoured the march of the detachment, which followed a beaten track in the middle of a wood; but on quitting it, to approach the ravine, we experienced considerable difficulty in passing through some very thick underwood, where every object was immersed in darkness. The greatest obstacles still awaited us in descending a mountain, from which our course was to be tracked over a region covered with snow to the depth of several feet. This dangerous descent, however, and the crossing of the torrent, were effected without any accident; and at five o'clock in the morning we arrived at our post, pierced with cold, and waiting in silence the moment when we were to advance upon the village. Before day-light we came to a hill, at the foot of which Gli-Parenti is situated,

Some musket-shots fired from the opposite side led us to imagine that the attack was commenced in that quarter. Accordingly we marched in quick-time, and with the more ardour, as we hoped to surprise the notorious bandit, and destroy his horde. But by one of those fatalities which generally mar all expeditions of the kind—whether it was that Francatripa was forewarned of our approach, or did not think himself sufficiently secure in this haunt, it is certain he had made his escape by three in the morning, thus baffling all our projects. The soldiers, who hoped to get possession of a rich booty, comforted themselves with the discovery of a cave containing an abundance of provisions and excellent wine.

The shots which seemed to announce the presence of Francatripa were fired at some peasants whom our soldiers took for brigands. One of these peasants or bri-

gands (terms which in this country are nearly synonymous) being wounded in the leg, and fearing it was intended to shoot him, discovered the magazine of provisions, on condition of his life being spared.

After having sufficiently rested and refreshed ourselves, we returned to our cantonments by the direct route. It is not much better than the circuitous one by which we came the night before. Gli-Parenti, surrounded by high mountains and furious torrents, and commanded by the ruins of an old castle, presents to the eye one of those savage situations which fill the soul with that secret horror which the gloomy pictures of Anne Radcliffe can so well inspire.

LETTER VI.

Town of Cosenza.—Manners of the Inhabitants.—Military Command of Places in Calabria.

Cosenza, January 15, 1808.

On the 30th of December, the Commandant received orders to proceed to Cosenza, with four companies of the staff of the battalion, to take the command of the place, and preside over the military commission. I can now give you some account of this town, for on my first arrival I was so much fatigued after a march performed in dreadfully bad weather, that I was not tempted to collect information respecting my new quarters.

Cosenza, the capital of hither Calabria, is situated at the bottom of a vast glen, upon the side of a hill which links itself

with the chain of the Apennines. This city, once the capital of Brutium, is one of the most ancient in the kingdom of Naples, and the most considerable of any in the Calabrias. It is the seat of an archbishop, and the residence of all the civil and military authorities of the province. The streets are in general narrow, crooked, and of difficult access, with the exception of the principal one, which is regularly constructed, at the foot of the hill, and watered by the Chratis. It was in this city that, about the year 410, death arrested the devastating career of Alaric. A thousand years afterwards, the body of this formidable chief of the Visigoths was discovered soldered in between two bucklers, and buried in the middle of the river,—a process adopted probably with the intention of rescuing his remains from the vengeance of the people who were the victims of his barbarity.

The high mountains in the vicinity of Cosenza, covered with snow and mist, render the temperature at this season always humid and disagreeable; but we hope that in a month hence we shall enjoy all the charms of spring, and have some delightful walks in this immense valley, which the Chratis inundates during the winter, but fertilizes in fine weather. However, when the heat commences, flowers are no longer seen: it is said that the city then becomes very unhealthy, and that the greater part of the inhabitants abandon it to retire to the mountains. Ever since the entry of the French, Cosenza has acquired an unusual character for gaiety and social intercourse. There are balls, and a variety of brilliant parties, at which liqueurs and sorbets are served round. The example of these parties, given by the principal authorities, who are generally composed of Frenchmen, has found some

mitators among the nobility of the country, many of whom possess considerable property. The ladies, delighted with our manners, have become very easy of access, to the great scandal of their husbands, who are by nature both despotic and jealous, but who still believe themselves to be under some restraint in their deportment towards us. To their great scandal, I say, the voluptuous waltz has superseded the fantastic dances of the country. All these innovations give rise to strange scenes in the midst of families. It is easy to perceive, from the conversation of these ladies, who, with an inconceivable frankness, make us the depositaries of the most strange secrets, that their morals, far from becoming corrupted, must, on the contrary, acquire a greater degree of purity, by the presence of the French.

However greatly public morals are relaxed in this city, it appears to me that

there is even still less of good faith than of continence among its inhabitants, judging from every thing I see passing before the Commandant, with whom I am spending my time.

Scarcely had he entered upon his duties, when a great number of the inhabitants, under the pretence of wishing him the compliments of the season, came to plague him with their complaints and reclamations, which did not end for several days afterwards. The multitude and futility of the complaints which they jabbered over in a most voluble strain, and the violent altercations which took place between them, so tormented the Commandant, that he ultimately turned the whole set out of doors. When these importunate fellows were ejected, there followed in succession the *gualant-uomini*, (the landed proprietors are so called,) who, with much earnestness and affected delight, first launched forth

into prose and verse, while wishing the Commandant a happy new year, and then all at once insinuated their reclamations in subdued and plaintive accents. At first they sought to be relieved from the burden of providing military quarters, each of them saying that it always fell upon himself. They next complained of the unfair division of the expense attending military transports; and then they pointed out several persons of the city as objects to be distrusted by us; saying, that they encouraged brigandage, and were secret enemies of the French; while they themselves were well known as having been at all times most devoted to our interests, and therefore exposed to pillage and devastation by the bands of Cardinal Ruffo, ever since the revolution of 1799, which overturned the Partheno-pean Republic. We, too late, had reason to be convinced that those who pretended

so much earnest zeal in our favour might justly be reproached with the very guilt which they denounced.

The commandants of stations or districts constitute the principal authority to which the Calabrians have recourse. They artfully endeavour to sound the character and disposition of each individual officer among them; they show themselves very dexterous in profiting by any facilities which may tend to promote their interests, or gratify their bad passions; but once discovered in their secret villainy, they are inflamed with a deadly spirit of revenge. An anonymous and envenomed denunciation, so contrived as to bear the appearance of truth, is addressed to the Commandant of the province, and by duplicate to the General of Division, who happily can see through, and despise this odious device. I shall here give you a recent instance of calumny, which turned out very unfortunate for its author.

Some days ago a man of strange stature, and countenance expressive of rage, presented himself before the Commandant. He began by stating abruptly that two young men of the battalion had attempted the honour of his nieces, who resided with him, and to whom he was guardian; that, having hastened to their assistance, he was beaten violently, and his nieces very ill used; adding at the same time, that unless justice was instantly done him, he would go and lay his complaint before the General, or even before the King himself. Seeing his great agitation and apparent sincerity, we did not for a moment doubt the truth of his story; but the result of an inquiry, which I myself instituted on the spot, convinced me that this man, jealous without any real cause of his two nicces, who werc at once the victims of his avarice and of his guilty desires, had been most brutally treated by him; and that the young soldiers, who were quartercd in the

opposite house, had entered for no other purpose than to secure them from savage violence, being frequently disturbed by their frightful cries. These females claimed my protection to escape from their unnatural uncle, having every thing to fear from him should they remain any longer in his power. They were sent to a convent, and the infamous calumniator was condemned to a month's imprisonment. But this piece of villainy scarcely deserves to be mentioned compared with all the horrors which we expect to come before the Military Commission. I am, unfortunately, a member of it, and shall give you some particulars in my next.

LETTER VII.

MILITARY COMMISSIONS ESTABLISHED IN CALABRIA.—SEVERAL ANECDOTES.

COSENZA, JAN. 26, 1808.

SINCE order has been perfectly re-established in France, Military Commissions are now remembered in that country only by name. Would to Heaven it may be always preserved from such a formidable tribunal as that which here exercises so dreadful a control! It was established in all the towns of Calabria at the time the general insurrection broke out after the loss of the battle of St. Euphemia. This violent measure was judged necessary to put down that spirit of brigandage which, being supported by the English, and encouraged by the greater part of the in-

habitants, caused, day after day, considerable loss to the French, and, if not suppressed, must have ended by producing a fresh insurrection.

Shortly after this tribunal was instituted in Calabria, Government had recourse to another expedient, which totally failed in producing the good effects that were expected to result from it. It was the organization of a National Guard, (called the Civic Guard,) in which the officers were composed of the principal proprietors of the soil,—persons naturally interested in preserving the public peace, and in protecting their possessions from the attacks of the brigands, who committed such frequent devastations upon them. It was thought that they might very effectually serve to maintain order while acting in concert with the French troops. The selection of the men who were to form the several companies was left to the free dis-

cretion of the officers. Afterwards, by a general order, promulgated and posted up through every part of the country, the use of arms was forbidden, under the most severe penalties, to all those who had not enrolled their names under the authority of the Civic Guard. The Calabrians, being in general passionately fond of the chase, now made the strongest professions of attachment to the Government, earnestly soliciting at the same time that they might be permitted to form part of this force. The number, however, being exceedingly limited in each commune, a violent degree of rivalry and contention arose among the parties, and the greatest disorders ensued. On the one side were witnessed arrogance, vexatious annoyance, and abuse of power, for the purpose of destroying personal enemies by charging them with crimes that were to come under the cognizance of the Military Commission; on the other side,

vengeance, and a junction with brigands to destroy the property of the denouncing parties.

This conflict of so many vile passions, this inextricable labyrinth of odious intrigues and dark plots, renders the office of the judges of the Military Commission equally painful and embarrassing. The prisons of Cosenza were crowded to such a degree, that an epidemic broke out, which threatened to spread all over the city, and it was therefore thought advisable to diminish the number of inmates, by releasing a considerable body of persons; who, on account of their tender age, appeared to deserve some indulgence. A similar measure being adopted throughout all the prisons of Calabria, thousands of individuals issued forth, who were conducted to Naples in chains, like so many galley-slaves, and escorted by French troops. These young people, the greater part of whom

have been prowling about with the brigands, are dispersed through some newly-raised Neapolitan regiments, from which they will most assuredly seek the very first opportunity to desert, and return armed and equipped to their former course of life.

After this purification, the reporter to the commission was instructed to institute proceedings against the great criminals. My pen refuses to exhibit in detail the frightful picture of monstrosities and unheard-of crimes which we are now on the eve of contemplating daily. Let one trait suffice, for it stamps the whole national character.

A brigand chief, whose cruelties have earned for him the name of *Il Boia*, (the executioner,) more enraged than any of his sanguinary associates against such unhappy Frenchmen as had the misfortune to fall into his hands, used to inflict upon them the most horrible tortures. Being

wounded in one of his attacks, he was at last secured and doomed to the scaffold, to the great joy of all those who were the objects of his vengeance. The enormities he had committed, the dreadful injuries he had done to a rich landowner, whose swineherd he had been formerly, made many of the inhabitants of Cosenza solicit as a favour that this wretch might be subjected to the same refinement of barbarity which he himself used daily to practise. It was urged that his nose should be first cut off, then his ears, then his lips; in short, they wished to employ a thousand different modes of torture upon him; contending that he should be made to drag on a life of agony until the hot weather, when his body, daubed over with honey to attract insects, should hang naked under the rays of a burning sun, so that he might thus expiate his criminal existence amidst the most excru-

ciating torments. A great number of young men residing in the town did not blush to volunteer their services to carry these horrors into execution. The proposition, however, was rejected with indignation, and *Il Boia* was hung with many of his associates, who died, like himself, with an indifference which was not to be ascribed to courage but to an inconceivable brutishness.

Judge, then, of the disgust attending the duties we have to perform on the Military Commission! We are obliged to sit to a very late hour, shocked in the mean time with a repetition of the same atrocities: the greater part of the judges knowing very little of Italian, the heads of the several charges must be explained to them. The hideous appearance of the accused very often decides the sentence; and perhaps it often happens that some of these gallows-looking wretches are con-

demned on light grounds. It must not, however, be supposed that our hearts are so hardened, and our minds so prejudiced, as to act upon slight evidence in a matter of such serious moment. We often succeed in vindicating the triumph of innocence, and were, on a late occasion, fortunate enough to develope a horrible plot.

A detachment of our troops quartered in a village at some distance from Cosenza, was supplied with provisions by the Commune. The Commander of the Civic Guard took into custody the baker who furnished the bread, and denounced him before the Military Commission as being guilty of mixing arsenic with the dough. Three witnesses signed their names to the charge, and some pounds of dough were produced to confirm it. These having undergone a chemical process, left no doubt whatever of the presence of arsenic. Such proofs seemed quite convincing; but

a variety of circumstances served to excite doubts in our minds, and at last it was clearly established that the accuser, a most determined villain, had no other grounds for the charge he had so wickedly concocted, than the feeling of deadly vengeance he indulged against the baker, whose daughter he wished to seduce. Cited before the tribunal, he was found to have absconded, together with his false witnesses, and this satisfied us as to the affair.

Would it not really seem to you that this Calabria, the soil of which is so often shaken, reposes upon the very fire of hell; and that every shock of an earthquake which it feels vomits forth on its surface a legion of devils?

LETTER VIII.

ABSTRACT OF THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY EVENTS WHICH HAVE OCCURRED FROM THE PERIOD OF THE ENTRY OF THE FRENCH INTO CALABRIA IN 1806, DOWN TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF 1808.

COSENZA, FEB. 19, 1808.

IN my last Letter I spoke to you about the battle of St. Euphemia, the unfortunate result of which has had so great an influence on the state of this country. As I shall sometimes have occasion to notice the military events which took place before our arrival in Calabria, I am induced to give you a general outline of them, in order to avoid digressions which would otherwise interrupt the details which I have to communicate.

The French army, under the command of Marshal Massena, appointed to subdue

the Kingdom of Naples, for the purpose of placing Prince Joseph upon its throne, entered the capital without any resistance, in the month of February 1806. King Ferdinand and Queen Caroline having taken refuge in Sicily, immediately lost the crown. This change of dynasty, supported by 40,000 men, received no check in the first instance: the provinces were occupied by our troops, and the new sovereign of this fine country became in a short time its undisturbed possessor.

Gaeta, however, a very strong fortress, and rendered important by its position, was still under the control of King Ferdinand; while his son, the Crown Prince, occupied Calabria, at the head of 18,000 Neapolitans. General Regnier marched against them early in March with a corps of 8000 men. The Neapolitans, being beaten, were driven in confusion to the strong position of Campotemese, where,

protected by some outworks and the natural difficulties of the place, they might have offered a most determined resistance. The Crown Prince, however, seeing his troops very little disposed to sustain the shock of the French, evacuated all his entrenchments, leaving behind him a part of his artillery, and a great number of prisoners. He was finally obliged to embark for Sicily, without being able to oppose the slightest resistance in those difficult passes, where a few thousand men might have arrested the progress of a numerous army. In the short space of fifteen days General Regnier saw himself master of the whole of Calabria. The terror inspired by the French was such, that at this time, if it had been possible to spare ten or twelve thousand men, Sicily might have been easily subdued; the English not being then in sufficient force to maintain their ground there; while, at the present moment, they

occupy all its strong places, and have established themselves in a manner to oppose to us the most obstinate resistance. Our troops, beguiled by apparent demonstrations of kindness. continued to enjoy in Calabria a state of deceitful security; when an English fleet, which had set out from the ports of Sicily, landed a corps of 8000 men from the bay of St. Euphemia on the 1st of July 1806.

General Regnier, having speedily mustered a part of his division, could observe from the heights of Maida the movements which the English might make. Seeing them remain in a state of inactivity close to their ships, he determined at once to give them battle on the plain below, hoping that by compelling them to re-embark, he should be able to stifle in the outset the insurrection which was then blazing all over Calabria, and which acted in concert with this movement of the English under

the command of General Stuart. In addition to superior numbers, they landed a formidable train of artillery, and were flanked and supported by the fire from their frigates, which were ranged along the coast within cannon-shot.

The French, to the number of four thousand five hundred men, and having only a single battery of light artillery, rushed forward to this unequal conflict with their accustomed intrepidity. Assailed with a dreadful fire before they had power to deploy, all their efforts became unavailing. In other respects, the attack failed altogether, and they committed the great error of giving battle without having sufficiently reconnoitred the position of the English, who were protected by trenches and thick underwood. General Regnier, seeing that the first brigade was thrown into confusion, and not having force enough to support it, ordered a retreat,

leaving one thousand five hundred men dead or wounded on the field of battle. This disastrous combat, fought on the 4th of July 1806, was the signal for a general insurrection in Calabria.

General Regnier has been reproached for having quitted the excellent position which he occupied on the heights, in order to attack the enemy on the plain, where the unhealthiness of the place was of itself sufficient to destroy the whole British army. The fact is, that a few days after this battle, in which the English lost a good many men, the pernicious fevers with which they were attacked obliged them to re-embark for Sicily.

I have heard it stated by some superior officers that motives of a personal nature induced the French General to act contrary to his ordinary prudence. Finding himself in presence of General Stuart, who, during the late campaign in Egypt, had

obtained some advantages over him, he was urged on to the attack by the hesitation of his adversary, and the fear of losing the opportunity of taking an honourable revenge. Thus the battle was decided upon against the advice of several generals. Men commonly judge of events by their results. Had General Regnier been successful, they would have extolled his boldness and ability; vanquished, he is made an object of censure, and has errors imputed to him. It is, however, only fair to suppose that General Regnier, a prudent and experienced man, had resolved upon this movement in consequence of the insurrectionary explosion which burst forth around him.

The remains of the French division, although encompassed by a horde of insurgents, still happily executed a retreat, which was rendered the more difficult in consequence of the harassing attacks of

the English. General Regnier proceeded slowly along the shores of the Adriatic, passing through Catanzaro, Cotrone, Rossano, and taking up a position at Cassano, on the other side of Campotemese, where he waited the arrival of the reinforcements which Marshal Massena was leading on in person after the capture of Gaeta. The reduction of this place, which was valiantly defended for three months by Prince William of Hesse-Philipstadt, was a very fortunate event under such circumstances.

Shortly after the arrival of the Marshal, Calabria was again carried at all points. This was the result of some combats, in which the insurgents, abandoned by the English, did not dare to expose themselves to our regular troops. They only strove to dispute all the passes, the attempt to carry which was attended with considerable loss. All their efforts proved

useless. The several towns and villages were disarmed; numerous arrests were made, and military commissions established, which condemned to death the principal chiefs of the insurrection. Every place in which any resistance was offered was pillaged and burned: the most rigorous military despotism was established in all quarters. The Calabrians were vanquished, but not put down. In the mean time, the violent measures which it was found necessary to adopt, struck terror into the great body of the people, and the rebels were now confined to a few bands, dispersed in the high mountains, which became the general haunt of the most atrocious brigands, who pillaged and massacred indiscriminately all persons that came in their way.

The insurgents were still in possession of some strong castles: that of Amantea held out with the most determined

spirit. The first attempt to storm it was repulsed with considerable loss; and it was necessary to have recourse to a regular siege, which lasted for five-and-twenty days. The fortress of Cotrone, a place well enclosed, also required a siege, which was murderous to our troops, by reason of the maladies that attacked them.

After the reduction of these two places, our soldiers were employed in pursuing those wandering bands which had taken refuge in the mountains—a duty attended with the most extraordinary fatigues. Routed from one point, they suddenly showed themselves upon another: they were often thought to have been destroyed by vigorous and well-combined attacks, but they soon re-appeared in still greater force, being recruited by the bandits sent from Sicily, and encouraged by some ill-disposed persons, who, not daring

to place themselves at the head of a new insurrection, secretly supported this brigandage, with the view of cutting off the French in detail.

Meanwhile the English, during their last invasion, possessed themselves of the fort of Reggio, and the castle of Scylla; where a hundred and fifty sick men offered a most heroic resistance. The enemy having thus secured two points of debarkation, renewed his attempt with a corps of six thousand Sicilians, under the command of the same Prince of Hesse-Philipstadt, who advanced upon Monteleone. General Regnier having quickly assembled a few battalions, attacked him near Miletto, on the 28th of May 1807, with far inferior forces, and routed him completely. Sharply pursued by two chasseurs of the 9th regiment, the Prince of Hesse owed his safety only to the swiftness of his horse.

After this victory, which was really decisive, inasmuch as it defeated all those insurrectionary schemes which were again ready to be carried into execution, the French division advanced to the extremity of Calabria. The fort of Reggio surrendered at discretion to avoid being carried by assault, and the castle of Scylla, which was occupied by an English detachment, was blockaded on the land side. To ensure the full command of the coast, it was necessary to take this fortress, which is situated at the entrance of the Straits of Sicily. Such a service required heavy artillery, and it was to be brought from Naples by sea, at the risk of its being captured by the English, who had already taken a great quantity. However, by incessant labour and perseverance, all difficulties were overcome, and a breach having been made, the place was carried by a *coup de main* with the greatest intrepidity; the

English had scarcely time to embark for Sicily. General Regnier having thus completed his work, quitted the command of Calabria, and was succeeded by the General of Division, Maurice Mathieu. We expect very soon to make a movement in advance ; some battalions are to arrive from Naples, and they talk of a project for a descent upon Sicily.

LETTER IX.

ROUTE FROM COSENZA TO NICASTRO. — DESCRIPTION OF THE BAY OF ST. EUPHEMIA.—THE BRIGAND CHIEF BENINCASA.

NICASTRO, FEB. 27, 1808.

WE are once more restored to Italy, with its beautiful climate and rich produce. This change is the more striking, since hitherto, having been accustomed to see nothing in Calabria except mountains covered with hoar frost, and valleys deluged with water, we now find ourselves, as if by magic, transferred to the garden of the Hesperides.

Having left Cosenza on the 22d, we arrived on the same day at Rogliano, where all the companies formed a junction. The next morning we descended

by a crooked flight of steps into a deep valley, of which, I believe, I have before given you some account. The whole battalion formed into one long file of men, with a train of horses and mules, which, winding along the sides of this steep declivity, presented the appearance of a vast theatrical array. The torrent which bellows forth from the bottom of this abyss, we passed over by means of a crazy bridge, leading to a narrow pathway, which, after a thousand turnings, and frequently placing us in a state of suspension over frightful precipices, conducted us close to the top of a high mountain. The snow, which here remains on the ground the whole winter, being now frozen over and slippery, increased the dangers of this most arduous passage. We were still fortunate in having accomplished it without falling into any ambuscade. The soldiers marching in single file, silently pursued their

way through all the windings of this mazy labyrinth, and they were getting out of it without any accident, when the troops escorting the baggage, having arrived at a narrow pass, at the verge of a steep rock, were suddenly assailed with a discharge of musket shot, which wounded several men. But fortunately, that part of the escort which had not yet got into this murderous pass, clambered rapidly up to the top of the mountain, where the brigands lay in ambush, and put them to flight. We were the less prepared for this treacherous surprise, since the advanced guard, charged with reconnoitring the heights, gave us no warning of it. The French are really happy in having no campaign to make in this country, which is full of cowardly bandits; for if the insurrection was organized, the inhabitants, while profiting by the great advantages which local difficulties present to

them at every pass, might, without any danger to themselves, destroy us in detail.

After a march of seven hours, the battalion arrived at Scigliano, the principal place of the canton, covered with mountains and forests. The following morning, on our departure for Nicastro, the hoar frost rendered the ground so slippery, that it was with extreme difficulty we could support ourselves in getting down a yawning abyss, enclosed by a steep mountain, the only ascent to the summit of which was by a very narrow and abrupt path. So glassy was our progress in consequence of the frost, that the mules could not ascend with their burdens, and the troops, with the most painful exertion, carried up the baggage to the platform which crowns the mountain.

We afterwards entered the plain of Sauveria, and halted for a long time near a large mansion, which is constantly oc-

cupied by a French detachment, stationed there to furnish escorts and hold in check the inhabitants of the adjacent villages, who are generally addicted to brigandage. This edifice has embattlements on its walls, and is protected by stockades. A dire event, which occurred on the very day of the battle of St. Euphemia, has rendered these precautions necessary. The company that occupied this post, being abandoned in consequence of the retreat of General Regnier, was attacked by the whole population of the surrounding neighbourhood, and having exhausted all its means of defence, was massacred to the very last man.

On quitting this plain, where the cold was extremely sharp, we ascended a hill which all at once presented us with one of the most charming views in nature. A vast horizon, bounded by the sea and illumined by the setting sun, whose rays

tinged the bay of St. Euphemia to a considerable distance, placed before us a picture of the most enchanting description, which was admirably contrasted with the wild and savage region we had just traversed. This magnificent and brilliant scene made us forget all the fatigues of our march; and the troops, whom excessive toil had made sullen and silent, now resumed all their wonted gaiety.

On the other side of the hill we passed by the beautiful village of Platania, whose inhabitants (of Albanian origin) approached us with an affable air; and we were no less charmed with the suavity of their manners than with the elegance of their attire. This was the first time when, far from flying from our presence, the people of these countries evinced a friendly disposition towards us. As we continued to descend, the cold sensibly diminished, and we soon found ourselves among olives,—a

happy indication of a fine temperate climate. At the close of the evening, the battalion entered Nicastro, inhaling with delight the balsamic odour which was shed from orange and lemon trees.

Nicastro is a large, well built town, situated at the entrance of hither Calabria The woody hills with which it is almost surrounded, and the lofty towers of an old castle that commands it, give to the place an appearance quite romantic and picturesque.

We have spent two days in exploring the localities of the bay, with which it is necessary that we make ourselves well acquainted. The mountains that environ it stretch out towards the sea on the one side as far as Cape Suvero, and on the other as far as the point on which the little town of Pizzo is built. This space, forming a circular tract of about twenty-five miles, is partly covered by a thick

forest, and traversed by two rivers, the Angitola and the Amato, whose waters not having sufficient vent, render the soil marshy and the air humid: two circumstances which, though favourable to vegetation, are still most injurious to health, for they never fail to generate diseases in the hot months. That part which is not inundated, produces Turkey corn in abundance, and this constitutes the principal support of the inhabitants; in the low grounds there are large plantations of rice, and we met with some sugar-canes which were perfectly well-grown. Olives, rising to the height of forest-trees, spread over all the upper tracts, but the oil is of a bad flavour, and used only in manufactories. A number of farm-houses and fine country-seats are scattered over the whole plain, particularly in the neighbourhood of Nicastro. This charming region, from which the confined waters might very

easily be removed by a free issue, never experiences any of the rigours of winter. So soon as the autumnal rains have ceased, the softest and most equal temperature renders it a delightful abode. The mountains, on which are seen a great number of villages and detached dwellings, present a singularly pleasing aspect; and from the great fertility of the soil, the inhabitants might lay up abundant and varied stores, did they but know how to avail themselves of the vast bounty offered to them by indulgent nature.

I have contemplated, with a good deal of interest, the memorable scene of the battle of St. Euphemia: I say memorable, for it is much talked of in this country; and judging from the localities, I should consider it would have been much better to have trusted to the malign influence of the climate in the month of July, which could not fail to destroy the English army.

At a distance of five miles from Nicastro stands the miserable village of St. Euphemia, built on the ruins of an old city, which has given its name to the bay. It was once considerable, and was destroyed in 1638 by a frightful earthquake, which converted the fine country round it into one vast and fetid lake.

Never am I destined to have done with that eternal plague of Calabria—brigandage. The forest of St. Euphemia is generally known as the haunt of one of the most active of the bandit chiefs. It was from this point chiefly that intelligence was received of the English being in correspondence with the numerous bands spread over the surface of the two provinces. The facility of debarkation has doubtless induced them to give a preference to this spot, bordering, as it does, on a high and woody mountain, the passes through which can secure them

access to those of the interior of the country. This forest, extremely thick, and with a swampy soil, is a mysterious labyrinth, of which none but the brigands can discover the clue. So complex and intricate are its numberless avenues, and so obstructed with underwood, which is absolutely impenetrable when defended by an armed force, that our troops have never been able to open a way through. An old villain named Benincasa, the most noted of all the Calabrian brigands, is the great leader of the several hordes that infest this dangerous quarter. Covered with murders and atrocities long before the arrival of the French, he could only escape justice by flying to the woods, and rallying around him a numerous band of assassins. Last autumn an attempt was made to destroy this frightful haunt; and to ensure success, it was determined to treat with Benincasa, and

offer him and his associates very advantageous terms; but the business has proceeded so slowly, and with so little address, that nothing effectual has yet been accomplished; while these brigands, fearing to be routed from their den, have again taken to the open country, after having committed all sorts of horrible atrocities.

The habits of a lawless mode of life, and of an independence equally savage and ferocious, in which the Calabrian peasants are bred up from their infancy, have constantly rendered useless all those amnesties which have so often been tried. They regard as a stratagem all means of lenity and persuasion to which we seek to have recourse, or as a proof of our weakness; hence nothing but the utmost rigour can be employed against them with effect.

It is feared that the English may attempt another landing on the coast, with

the view of diverting us from those preparations for a descent which are now going on with so much activity upon the shores of the Straits. But as Sicily cannot be carried by a *coup de main*, it is not probable that the chimerical idea can be entertained of making so difficult a conquest with the seven or eight thousand men who are encamped between Reggio and Scylla. We cannot conceive the object of these movements. In the mean time artillery officers proceed continually to and from Naples, the head-quarters. The brigands show themselves with the greatest audacity; trouble and consternation prevail in every mind, and it is necessary to redouble our efforts and vigilance in order to be prepared for whatever may occur.

LETTER X.

Situation of the French at Nicastro.—Enmity of the Inhabitants.—Events which occurred while we were quartered in that City.

Nicastro, March 20, 1808.

An aide-de-camp of the King's suite, who passed through here within the last three days, has put an end to our conjectures respecting the projected descent upon Sicily. The object was to draw the attention of the English to this point, for the purpose of sending in safety to Corfu the provisions and reinforcements which are expected at Otranto by the squadron coming from Toulon. The plan has perfectly succeeded. The English have diminished the number of their cruisers in the Adriatic, and drawn them nearer to

their fleet off Sicily. Our convoy has happily arrived at its destination, and all preparations for a descent have ceased. But while the visit of this officer has satisfied our curiosity, it had nearly proved very disastrous to us. On the 17th, the day of his arrival, the companies composing the garrison of Nicastro had furnished so large a number of detachments, chiefly for the purpose of escorting those persons who were employed in levying contributions, that there remained behind not more than fifty disposable men. The Aide-de-camp took thirty men as his escort to Monteleone, and we could not muster above forty more in the whole city, including the ordnance guard and the disabled. The Commandant feeling uneasy about our situation, which was indeed very critical, since the brigands might be tempted to take advantage of it, conceived the happy thought of assembling us together in a

chapel, attached to the church which served as a barrack for our soldiers. After having strengthened the post of the prison, he patrolled for some time, and then returned to our little garrison. Being well barricaded, some of us slept soundly; when, about midnight, we were suddenly roused by the discharge of fire-arms and hideous yells.

All the brigands of the neighbourhood were approaching the prison in a body, in the hope of releasing their parents, who were detained there as hostages; but the guard, commanded by an officer, received them with a murderous fire, which soon slackened their ardour. As it was to be expected they would make a similar attack upon the barrack, the Commandant proposed that we should anticipate them, by rushing out to give them battle. Accordingly, we sallied forth, to the number of seventeen, armed from top to toe. The

darkness and confusion suffering us to approach without being perceived, we discharged a volley at a vast assemblage of persons, who, in an instant, betook themselves to flight, panic-struck, and leaving many dead and wounded on the spot. We had not to regret the loss of a man. These bandits, possessing very little courage, placed us in a situation the more embarrassing, because the inhabitants of Nicastro, by their culpable inactivity, seemed to favour the surprise. After this affair shall have been reported to the General-in-Chief, they must expect to be treated with the greatest rigour; but if our safety depends on making them in some degree responsible for it, we must still, in fairness, admit, that the situation of the landed proprietors of this country is most deplorable. Independently of the hatreds and enmities so common among the Calabrians, they employ against each

other the most odious means of vengeance, making the brigands their sanguinary agents. Benincasa, the natural protector of all the enemies of the French, and the formidable destroyer of the property of all those who seem to favour them, has established an arbitrary sway over the political opinions and conduct of private individuals. Like a ferocious beast of prey, he darts forth from his lair at night, and the day never fails to discover some new act of savage treachery — some new disaster. The landowners could never rescue themselves from this painful situation without acting with the greatest address towards the brigands, and silently submitting to their exactions of provisions and money. On the other hand, this conduct necessarily subjects them to a rigid surveillance by the French commanding-officers, who, accusing them of being the authors and

abettors of brigandage, very frequently cast them into prison.

Deprived of all correct information, and surrounded by snares and treachery, it is impossible for us to adopt any effectual measures to tranquillize this country. Our safety being every moment compromised, we are obliged to redouble our vigilance and activity; this exhausts our poor soldiers with fatigue, and they drop off daily.

Since the first of January we have received neither pay nor appointments, and our men are obliged to subsist upon half rations of a bad quality. As they are continually in motion, their supplies of shoes and stockings were soon exhausted, and they are now, for the most part, obliged to adopt the sort of covering used by the peasants, which consists of a piece of pig's skin in the form of a sandal, and tied

round with packthread above the ankle. The officers, removed to a long distance from their country in this inhospitable land, where their friends cannot run the risk of sending them assistance, experience great privations. They are obliged to depend for their daily support on the tables of the commanding officers, furnished by the communes. Calabria being without inns or taverns, the marching officers and employés partake with the commandants of fare which is very indifferent, but always seasoned with good wine and a fund of inexhaustible mirth.

Having no other society here, we are obliged to live continually among ourselves, our only relief being the table, the pleasures of which we generally take care to prolong. All our thoughts and conversations are turned towards our dear country, from which we very rarely re-

ceive any news. From the commencement of the siege of Scyla, and particularly since the late preparations which appeared directed against Sicily, the brigands, excited by the English, employ themselves chiefly in intercepting our couriers, some of whom are doomed to a tragical fate. Within the last eight days, we have had the misfortune to experience a very cruel instance, and one absolutely like that of which we were almost eye-witnesses on our entry into Calabria.

The courier from Naples, who had been so long expected, at length arrived here safe and sound. His presence excited the greatest joy, from the hope of his being the bearer of intelligence from our friends. The escort of this courier, composed of a serjeant and fifteen voltigeurs, was afterwards ordered to conduct him to Monteleone, where there is a military station es-

tablished. It was joined by eight chasseurs, with a brigadier, returning from head-quarters, and who, unfortunately, instead of following the courier, started in advance of him about a mile. The escort was preceded by three voltigeurs, who, while reconnoitring the entrance of a ravine, had scarcely time to give the alarm, when they were brought to the ground by a discharge from the brigands, and at the same moment the detachment saw itself surrounded on every side. The serjeant, the courier, and eight voltigeurs were killed, and five men, who were all that escaped from this massacre, came in breathless haste to give us the melancholy details. The Commandant, consulting rather the impulse of his heart than the hope of overtaking the bandits, immediately sent me off with a detachment. Arrived at the scene of carnage, I found our unfortunate soldiers lying bathed in

their blood, and without any signs of life. The cloak-bags had been stripped of their contents, and an immense number of letters, torn to pieces and stained with blood, lay scattered about on the ground. After having in vain scoured all the environs, I returned to Nicastro, deploring from the bottom of my heart the loss of our brave soldiers, victims of this horrible war.

Brigandage is indeed carried to the utmost pitch of horror in this country; it interdicts us from taking a walk in the suburbs, no matter how short the distance. Confined within the narrow precincts of a town, the inhabitants of which give notice of our slightest movements, we cannot possibly stir beyond the walls without an escort. Happily, however, our Generals have established a rule of not allowing the troops to remain for any length of time in the same station;

and as that of Nicastro is regarded as one of the most fatiguing, we hope very soon to quit a spot which would be a perfect paradise if it was not inhabited by demons.

LETTER XI.

Town of Monteleone.—Pleasant Quarters.—Manners of the Inhabitants.

Monteleone, April 5, 1808.

While our existence at Nicastro became every day more and more intolerable, it was still by no means proper that we should apply for a change of station. We attained our object, however, through the means of some friends who are attached to the Staff, and the battalion was ordered to march to Monteleone, the most agreeable quarters I have yet met with in Calabria. We can at least freely walk abroad without any fear of treacherous attacks. But the environs are far from possessing that smiling aspect which presents itself on that part of the plain of St. Euphemia

which borders on Nicastro. On the 29th of March, the day of our departure, it seemed to deck itself out with a refinement of coquetry, as if to excite our regret for leaving it. The ground we marched over was strewed with flowers, which a precocious spring shed from the trees, and we proceeded between hedges of laurels, myrtles, and pomegranate-trees. A blooming foliage presented itself on every side, and received within its shade thousands of singing birds. But the charm ceased so soon as we reached the wild and marshy banks of the Amato. This river is divided into several branches, and flows over a muddy bed, which renders the passage dangerous. They have commenced building wooden bridges, which it is very desirable should be soon finished. The muleteers acquainted with the passage led the way, and we reached the other side without meeting with any ac-

cident, except that which happened to an officer, who, in his impatience, urging on too hastily the intractable animal he rode, caused it to deviate from the regular line, and he was on the point of being engulfed in the mud. The mule, making vain efforts to get out, stuck fast in the mire, so that in a few minutes no part of it was visible except the head and tail. The officer, with a good deal of difficulty, succeeded in disengaging himself; but to extricate the mule, it was necessary to employ the planks and beams used in the construction of the bridge.

We afterwards traversed a forest of oaks and cork trees, bordering on a vast pile of building called *Fondaco-del-Fico*, falling in ruins in every part, and converted into a wretched tavern, set off with the pompous designation of *Osteria di Cicerone*, (Cicero's inn). Curious to ascertain by what accident so illustrious a name

could be rendered familiar in a place so disgusting, I learned at Monteleone, that in ancient times there stood near this spot a town called *Hipponium*, now buried in the sea; and that Cicero, having taken refuge there after flying from Rome to escape the vengeance of Clodius, resided at *Fundus Sicæ*, called Fundaco-del-Fico at the present day, whence many of his letters to Atticus are dated.

This country is celebrated in antiquity for brilliant inventions of poetical fiction. The poet tells us that Proserpine, the lovely daughter of Ceres, used constantly to come down from Mount Enna, in Sicily, to the smiling plains of *Hipponium*, for the purpose of presiding at the harvest, and, encircled by a group of young beauties, used to gather the flowers which enamelled the fields, at that time so fragrant, but now deserted, in consequence of noxious swamps, which render this one

of the most unhealthy places of residence of any in all Calabria.

Monteleone is built upon a little eminence, which commands a vast elevated platform, situated between the bay of St. Euphemia, that of Gioia, the chain of the Apennines, and the sea. A magnificent spectacle presents itself on every side, and the view is crowned in the distance by the bluish smoke of Etna. The appearance of this little town, surrounded by a castle encompassed with fine trees, is equally pleasing and picturesque. Its population is about seven thousand souls. It has some streets regularly built, and embellished with fine houses. Lofty mountains, covered with forests, rising majestically close to the town, secure it from the winds and hoar frosts of the north; the springs which issue from the foot of these mountains fertilize the surrounding country, and moderate the ex-

cessive heat of summer, rendering this town a most agreeable abode at every season of the year.

The head-quarters of the Commander-in-Chief are always at Monteleone, the central point of all our military operations. The Intendant and principal civil authorities of the province are also established here. I have the good fortune to be quartered at the house of a worthy ecclesiastic, who, after having been a long time Professor of History at the University of Bologna, has retired to Monteleone, his native place. He has a fine library, and is principally anxious to collect all those historical works, both ancient and modern, which treat of Calabria. This enables me to furnish myself with information the most correct and interesting. Every man in this town, who has any pretensions to acquirement or desert, courts his society. I am very well received

among them, from the praise I bestow upon the sublime beauties of their country, and the desire I evince to make myself perfectly acquainted with it. In general, the inhabitants of this province deserve to be distinguished from those of hither Calabria; there are found among them fewer prejudices, less barbarism, and consequently less propensity to brigandage. The country being by no means so mountainous as the hither province, affords facility to communications; the sea-coast being more accessible, and nearer to Sicily, causes a constant intercourse to be kept up with Messina and Palermo: a state of things that must tend to introduce enlightenment and urbanity. This result is chiefly observable among the females, who show a better knowledge of the world than those of the hither province, by reason of being under less restraint. But what charms me most of all is, that we

no longer hear of those deplorable scenes of brigandage, of which I have so often given you an account. I purpose profiting by this happy situation, to make an excursion through the country, and shall commence it by accompanying the Commandant on his tour of inspection.

LETTER XII.

Excursion to Nicotera, Tropea, Pizzo.—Description of those Towns and their Environs.

Monteleone, April 17, 1808.

We set out for Nicotera on the morning of the 10th of April, forming a joyous party of six individuals, well-mounted and armed. We passed over a plain covered with rich crops, and planted with olive-trees as high as oaks. We met with few villages, but there was a considerable number of farm-houses, well-built, and surrounded with large elms, the trunks of which were interlaced with olive garlands, that sent forth their vigorous shoots to the very tops of the trees.

The town of Nicotera, situated eighteen miles from Monteleone, presents from all

sides a most charming prospect. From the moment the sun began to go down, I descried from my apartment the most elevated part of the shores of Sicily commanded by Mount Ætna. On my right I observed in the distance the Lipari Isles; and as the shades of night descended, the summit of Stromboli, always glowing with flame, enhanced the grandeur of this superb spectacle. The weather was delightful; the winds, shut up in the vast caverns of the Æolian Isles, disturbed not the surface of the deep, reflecting from afar the flames of the volcano, which seem destined to serve as a beacon to warn off vessels from the rocks and shoals that encompass it.

It is generally thought that the Lipari Isles, called by the ancients the Æolian Isles, are a volcanic creation. The astonishing changes which they have undergone at different epochs would seem to

establish the fact. The ancients reckoned them at only seven, but at the present day there are eleven, whose tops always smoking, still emit neither flame nor volcanic matter. Stromboli is the only furnace among them which is continually burning. It was here that Virgil placed the forge of Vulcan, in which the celestial armour of Æneas was made. It was in these Isles, too, that the ancients fixed the residence of Æolus the god of the winds, who kept them confined in vast caverns, from which, at his good pleasure, he could raise tempests or favour navigation. Diodorus Siculus says that a sage naturalist named Æolus has given rise to this fable. Having succeeded in predicting the state of the weather by means of observations on the smoke and other volcanic phenomena, he excited the belief that the winds were obedient to his will.

But I shall now dismiss both systems

and fictions, to return simply to the narrative of my excursion.

A part of Nicotera is built on the rapid descent which leads to the bay of Gioia. It is composed of small ill-constructed huts, and inhabited by fishermen, whose wretched attire is a sufficient indication of their poverty. In the upper part there is a fine square, together with many splendid houses, among which that of the archbishop is the most conspicuous. The environs are well cultivated, and still covered with volcanic remains, which attest the ravages occasioned by the memorable earthquake of 1783. I was lodged at a fine mansion, regulated with great propriety by two young ladies who had been educated at Messina, where, in addition to the cultivation of their talents, they acquired a due knowledge of the world. Their father, a widower for many years, was a man of very affable manners and

great information. He told me he had lost a vast part of his fortune in consequence of the destruction of Scyla, where his father had considerable property. He was an eye-witness of this dreadful disaster, and gave me a terrific account of it, which corresponds entirely with the statements of the time.

On the 5th of February 1783, about one o'clock in the afternoon, a violent shock of earthquake was experienced, which precipitately forced several of the inhabitants from their dwellings. My narrator having taken refuge on an adjacent mountain, was thrown down, together with his father, by a second shock, which was much more violent than the first. The ground was convulsed in all directions; the houses were shattered in every part; the thick walls and lofty towers of the castle, swept away from their foundations, carried ruin through the town, tumbling down build-

ings and habitations, and burying beneath them a great number of persons who had still remained behind. The inhabitants who had escaped from this calamity, far from being prepared to expect the new danger that menaced them, went down to the open shore, where they employed themselves in forming some sort of shelter with the ruined remnants of their dwellings. The sea was calm, the atmosphere pure and serene, the midnight hour approached, and that repose, which was so necessary to those unfortunate people, began to succeed to wailings and the accents of despair; when all at once the whole promontory of Campalla fell into the sea without having given any previous warning. This enormous mass caused the waters to overflow the opposite coast, where a great number of Sicilians perished, and rushing back again with impetuosity upon the shores of Scylla, they swallowed

up all those persons who had taken refuge there. The early dawn presented to the eyes of such as had escaped from this terrible convulsion of nature, a multitude of dead bodies horribly disfigured, and the sad remnant of this unhappy population wandering about at random, a prey to the most frightful despair and the most cruel misery. "Alas! Sir," added he, "this fine province may one day or other be destined to witness the renewal of a similar calamity. We are placed in the midst of the most active volcanoes, Ætna, Vesuvius, and Stromboli, which, by their subterranean communications, never cease to threaten our soil." His amiable daughters, knowing that the recollection of this awful catastrophe generally plunged him into a deep melancholy, endeavoured to enliven the rest of the evening by accompanying themselves on the guitar with fine Sicilian airs.

Next day I took leave of this interesting family. We sent on our horses to Tropea, and in less than a quarter of an hour descended to the sea-beach, where we got into a fishing-boat to proceed to Cape Vaticano, celebrated for the victory which Sextus Pompey gained there over the fleet of Augustus. We landed in a creek, above which was constructed a battery of two mortars, with two twenty-four pounders mounted on moveable frames. An officer and thirty men of the battalion are charged with the defence of this post, to protect coasting.

This Cape is covered with myrtles, laurels, and the finest aloes I have ever seen. It projects for some distance into the sea, and affords shelter to a great number of fishing-boats, which find here secure anchorage against the winds. We dined very pleasantly under the cool shade upon fish of every kind, and an abundance

of quails. This is the season at which these birds of passage arrive from Africa. They are so fatigued by their long aërial voyage, that there is no difficulty in catching them with the hand. The fishermen catch them in thousands, by extending their nets along the rocks, and this they call "quail fishing."

Our intention in stopping here was to take a closer view of Stromboli. This formidable peak, more elevated than Vesuvius, is of the same height with the Cape, and distant from it only about forty miles. About six o'clock in the evening we could distinguish it very plainly; and at night-fall, the flame issuing from it seemed to approach us. This vast conflagration glowing in the midst of the deep, produced an effect equally surprising and magnificent. We passed the night at a large house, which serves as a barrack for the detachment; and next

morning at day-break we set out on foot for Tropea, proceeding along the sea-coast. After we had traversed a wild desert tract for about three miles, the land began to expand upon our view, exhibiting before us a splendid country, richly cultivated, and ornamented with beautiful gardens and fine houses, surrounded with orange groves. We afterwards entered into a noble avenue leading to the town. This charming plain, which has in the back-ground a mountain covered with vines, olives, and mulberry-trees, is watered by several streams that, after forming fine cascades, are used in turning mills. On quitting this magnificent walk, the eye is all at once arrested by an immense rock, terminating in a peak, and apparently suspended above the sea. The town of Tropea, built upon its summit, displays an appearance which is remarkably picturesque. It is connected with

the continent only by a very narrow tongue of land, formerly defended by a castle, which is now in ruins.

The Syndic received us very politely, and procured us excellent lodgings, where we met with the greatest affability. This fine part of Calabria being entirely free from brigandage, has never had with the French authorities any of those painful transactions, which, by causing terror and constraint, banish every sentiment of social kindness. The inhabitants take delight in conversing with strangers on the origin of their town, attributing it to Scipio Africanus. Its ancient name, *Trophea*—become Tropea by corruption—proceeds, according to these people, from the trophies which this illustrious Roman gained in Africa.

Having yet to visit two companies quartered at Pizzo, we arrived there on the 13th. This little town is finely situ-

ated. Its harbour, though neither secure nor extensive, could still boast considerable commerce before the war: its inhabitants, little disposed to agriculture, and reduced to a state of great misery by the stagnation of trade, are ever ready to manifest their discontent, and this obliges us to keep up a very strong garrison there. At the present moment there is a good deal of bustle and animation in the harbour, for they are shipping a great quantity of merchandise, which they are endeavouring to send in safety to Naples, under the protection of a flotilla of gun boats. The 15th was the day fixed upon for our return to Monteleone. I shall ever recollect with pleasure the magnificent scene I have enjoyed, the delightful spring days which enhance the charm, and the kind and courteous reception I met with wherever I took up my passing abode.

LETTER XIII.

Excursion to Reggio.—Description of Palmi, Scylla, and the Straits of Messina. — Beauty of the Environs of Reggio.—Singular Phenomena, known by the name of "Fata Morgana."

Monteleone, May 4, 1808.

I had the most earnest desire to make an excursion to Reggio. Not being able to undertake it alone, I obtained permission to have for my companion a very intelligent officer, who was sent by the Commander-in-Chief, with an escort of chasseurs, to inspect the works which they are now constructing on different points of the coast. Arrived at an early hour at Nicotera, I was delighted to pass the day with the same amiable family who gave me so kind a reception on the first occasion of my entering the town. Next

day we remained for the night at Palmi. The shores of the gulf of Gioia, which lead to it, are traversed by many rivers, rendering the soil marshy, and very unhealthy in the hot months. A vast forest, extending within a musket-shot of the beach, occupies the greater part of the surface of the soil, and conceals, like the fastnesses of St. Euphemia, a great number of malefactors, who, in the manner of ferocious wild beast, suddenly rush forth from their den, whenever they can make certain of their prey. To avoid the shots which so frequently salute the ears of travellers, we followed the course of the beach, rendered hard by the dashing of the surges upon it. We had on our left the village of Gioia, (joy;) so called, perhaps, by reason of the excellent wine that is produced on the hill on which it stands.

Palmi, built upon the sea-coast at the foot of Monte Corona, is one of the finest

towns that can be met with in any country. Destroyed by the earthquake of 1783, it has been rebuilt on a regular plan. The centre of the town is occupied by a grand square, with a superb fountain playing in the midst of it. The surrounding country is delightful, and the inhabitants have an appearance of health and comfort rarely to be found in Calabria. On setting out from Palmi to Scylla we entered a forest of chesnut-trees, whose height was prodigious. It is generally observed that the chesnut grows to an immense size on a soil covered with volcanic ashes; one particular tree in the vicinity of Mount Ætna is so celebrated, that it passes for the finest production of the kind which can be met with in Europe. Painters and travellers, who run over Italy in such great numbers, go to Sicily for the express purpose of sketching it. It is called Castagno-di-cento-Cavalli, because

they pretend that its foliage is so ample as to embrace within its shade a hundred men on horseback.

On quitting these fine chesnut-trees, we beheld all at once, and as if by enchantment, a view so transporting, that an involuntary burst of surprise and admiration escaped us. The Strait which separates Sicily from Calabria, always animated by a great number of ships and small craft, which cross each other in every direction, produces an extraordinary effect. In the distance is seen the superb Messina, with its magnificent harbour and splendid country, covered with beautiful seats. Towns, villages, and palaces are grouped together on the acclivity of mountains covered with the finest verdure; lastly, that vast colossal mass, Mount Ætna, which by turns fertilizes and ravages Sicily, terminates a horizon, the charms of which are inexpressible. Setting out

before daylight to contemplate the height of the mountain, we beheld the sun's earliest rays emerging from the bosom of the deep and gilding the summit of the volcano, which is covered with eternal snows. The moment being favourable to distinguish, at least in distant perspective, the varied beauties of this sublime picture, we remained admiring it till the instant when the sun, expanding its light over every object, gave an equal tinge to all with its vivid brilliancy. After a quarter of an hour's walk across some thick fern, the colour of which could scarcely be discerned, it was so covered with dust, we reached a field occupied by the 20th regiment, and here I learned the cause of this singular appearance. The regiment having been out at exercise very early on the morning before, found itself suddenly enveloped in the thick ashes which the wind wafted down from Mount Ætna and

which fell in such quantities during a quarter of an hour, that they were obliged to take shelter in their barracks. After having breakfasted with our comrades, we descended the steep pass which leads to Bagnara, a little town almost entirely inhabited by fishermen and mariners. Arrived at Scylla, I endeavoured to ascend to the castle built upon that famous rock, which was the terror of ancient navigators. From this elevated point I had an admirable view of the opening of the Strait, which, cooped in between a sand-bank, called "La Coda-della-Volpa," (the Fox's Tail,) on the Calabrian side, and the tongue of land on which the lighthouse is built, in Sicily, presents an extent of about two miles. Standing on the terrace of the castle, I beheld at my feet the wild surges which are raised by the currents and rocks bordering on this vast shelf; they dash against it with a tremendous

noise, and, roaring, enter into a deep cavern, which they have made by beating incessantly against the rock. The poets represent these sharp points of the rock as so many barking dogs, ready to devour all passengers. Since the time of these brilliant fictions the channel has been considerably enlarged, and navigation has made immense progress; yet still the entrance of the Strait is not even now unattended with danger. Woe be to the pilot, who, inexperienced in this difficult passage, cannot shun the whirlpools into which a violent current serves to drive him. He runs the risk of being dashed from Scylla against Charybdis, another mass of rocks, no less dangerous, lying on the Sicilian coast.

The castle of Scylla is built on the extremity of the rock, which, jutting out into the sea, forms an elevated promontory. It is surrounded with thick walls, and

flanked with strong towers, on which cannons and mortars are placed. This fortress has excellent casemates, and a magnificent cistern, to which there is a descent by a flight of steps. The difficulty experienced in laying siege to it is in the transport of cannon to the scarp of the adjacent mountain: but, once planted there, the fire of the place is soon silenced, and an approach can then be easily made to open a breach. Its situation at the entrance of the Strait renders it a very important military post. The town of Scylla encompasses the castle upon a rapid declivity leading to the sea; its inhabitants, engaged in fishing and commerce, furnish excellent seamen, and the most intrepid divers that can anywhere be found.

The following morning, after having climbed up the counterscarp of the mountain, called "La Meglia," we proceeded on our way to Reggio. We soon afterwards

arrived at the delightful village of Campo, composed for the most part of fine houses, lying detached from each other, in charming situations. Following the course of the plain, which extends several miles beyond Reggio, we passed by Villa San-Giovanni Catona, situated immediately opposite Messina. The channel is here four miles broad. We kept the coast all the way till we entered Reggio.

This city is renowned in antiquity for its situation, its delightful country-seats, its mild and salubrious climate, its great extent, and vast opulence. Misfortunes of every kind have served to destroy it in modern times. Reduced to ashes by Barbarossa in 1544, it was afterwards twice sacked and pillaged in the same century; and lastly, on the 5th of February 1783, it was razed to the foundation, at the same time with Messina and a great part of Calabria. Ever since this period it has

had but a poor and dejected population. Its environs are yet covered with ruins, from which a new town has been built. There are in it some good streets, but with little or no bustle or animation.

It is impossible to imagine any thing finer than the country round Reggio: it yields at once the choicest and the most varied productions. Numerous rivulets and springs gush forth from the foot of the neighbouring mountains, meandering through bowers formed of orange and lemon-trees, and diffusing in their progress both freshness and fertility. It is a vast garden, decked out with aromatic groves, which realize the *beau ideal* of Paradise. The sea-shores present an enchanting prospect at all points. The Strait resembles a majestic river, which opens to itself a passage between two lofty mountains: the currents purify the air, and cause a breeze which moderates the great

heat of the summer season: in a word, the climate, soil, and situation of Reggio, present to the imagination all that poetical fable has invented as most alluring and seductive. This happy country carried on before the war a considerable trade in silk, wines, oil, and oranges. To complete the charm which I experienced in this delightful region, nothing was wanting but the appearance of an extraordinary phenomenon, called "Fata Morgana." On asking for some description of it from several of the inhabitants, they assured me that, though eye-witnesses of its presence, they could give me no satisfactory idea of it. Therefore, not having seen it myself, I can only briefly advert to the descriptions of some writers on the subject, among others, Mazzi and Angelucci.

During the heat of summer there prevails sometimes a calm so still that the currents of the Strait lose all their acti-

vity. The sea, cooped in between the mountains, rises several feet above its ordinary level. This rise takes place at an hour of the day when all the objects on the shore are reflected in colossal forms. The undulating changes of this marine mirror, cut into facets, repeat in a thousand different shapes all those images, which follow each other in such rapid succession, that their brilliancy increases or disappears the moment the sun has attained a certain height. If the phenomenon takes place when the atmosphere is charged with electric matter, the various objects reflected in the air redouble the charm of the scene, and its magical effect is exaggerated by the ardent imagination of the inhabitants, who see above them magnificent palaces, colonnades, and delightful gardens.

On the 30th of April we left Reggio to return to Monteleone by the direct route.

Having arrived at Aspramonte, we descended into an extremely deep valley, covered with lofty trees, beneath which stands the village of Solano, with a river running through it, which falls into the sea betwen Scylla and Bagnara. The vast height of the mountains, the beauty of the trees which are spread over them, the murmur of waters forming fine cascades, and the freshness which is everywhere diffused around, add considerably to the many charms of this romantic spot.

After an ascent of about two hours, we reached the top of the mountain, which, by a gentle declivity on the other side, led us, through large plantations of olives, to the town of Seminara. Next day we proceeded to Mileto, by Rosarno, a small and almost deserted town, situated on an eminence surrounded by marshes, over which some wooden bridges are thrown. This place is truly the abode of misery

and desolation. The inhabitants, during a part of the year, are a prey to destructive fevers, which have already carried off a great number of Frenchmen. Mileto is a very large and well-built town, with a fine episcopal palace, which now is converted into a barrack. I visited the field of battle, where some weak French battalions completely routed 6000 Sicilians, commanded by the Prince of Hesse-Philipstadt. This glorious event, by retrieving the check we experienced at St. Euphemia, has given us that ascendant which is so essential to us in maintaining our ground in this country. I yesterday returned to Monteleone. If my previous excursion to Nicotera, Tropea, and Pizzo, afforded me delight, I ought to preserve a lasting recollection of that which I have just made.

LETTER XIV.

General Description of Calabria. — Its Climate, Produce, and Commerce. — Its State at the Time of the Republics of Ancient Greece. — Its Present State. — Destruction caused by Earthquakes.

Monteleone, May 18, 1808.

I now proceed to give you a general description of Calabria, from the picture it has presented to me so long as I have been here, and from the private information with which I am furnished daily. The two provinces of the kingdom of Naples, passing under the designation of hither and ulterior Calabria, occupy the extremity of the South of Italy, forming a peninsula, the length of which, from the village of Rotonda to Cape Spartivento, is one hundred and seventy miles, or about fifty-five French leagues; and its breadth varies

from seventy to five-and-thirty miles. This peninsula, encompassed by the Mediterranean, is intersected with lofty mountains throughout its whole extent, which are a continuation of the chain of the Apennines. Their summit is crowned for the greater part with a vast platform, called La Syla, the surface of which is covered with fine pasture, rich farms, and large villages. The temperature here is very cold, the snow continuing from the end of November till the beginning of April. The tops of these mountains, whence numberless springs and rivulets issue, present a sombre and imposing aspect. They are encircled by thick forests, consisting principally of fine chesnut-trees. A great number of towns and villages are grouped together in a picturesque manner under shades which ought to be the abode of peace and happiness; the land is very fertile, and there are rarely seen

those naked rocks which indicate the absence of cultivation. But if the eye reposes with pleasure on the beauty and variety of the situations which the mountains present, it cannot contemplate without dismay those deep and dark ravines, the inhabitants of which never find their silence disturbed, except by the roar of waters which, in the rainy season, form frightful torrents. There is not in Calabria any navigable river. The Laino, the Chratis, the Nieto, the Amato, and the Angitola, are only emanations from that multitude of torrents which furrow up and ravage the cultivated lands, inasmuch as their beds are never at rest.

Such is the general aspect of the interior of the country; that of the plains washed by the sea is less animated, less varied; presenting alternately a soil arid and parched by a burning sun, and rendered fresh and fertile by genial rains.

The plains, inhabited during the hot months, contain only a few indigent families. Worn down by intermitting fevers, they never enjoy any relaxation from them, except during the winter months; and thus their lives, passed between severe alternations, are generally cut short. Residence in this quarter, however, is dangerous only to those who are obliged to pass their nights on the spot. In the autumn season, the harvest people come down from the mountains and spread themselves over the flat country in great numbers; but as they return to their habitations before sun-set, they escape the noxious effects of the vapours which issue from the dry beds of the torrents, and from waters corrupted by passing over a foul course. The demands of the service frequently oblige our troops to bivouac in these pestilential places, where persons are oppressed with a heaviness

and an inclination to sleep, which can scarcely be resisted. Our men, however, have generally escaped by a total denial of sleep, and by lighting large fires. But what severe losses had we not sustained before we became acquainted with the climate—losses a thousand times more murderous than those occasioned by the brigands! As soon as the snow falling on the mountains purifies the atmosphere, the plains are rendered habitable, and become a delightful retreat. The first rains of autumn refresh the arid soil, and bring forth a new crop, which covers the whole country with herbs and flowers. Then the people breathe a mild air, charged with perfumes from countless shrubs and plants, such as are kept in our conservatories for variety and ornament. The landed proprietors then quit the mountains to enjoy the charms of a new spring, and devote themselves

to the pleasures of the chase. At this season the mountains are covered with thick fogs: the swelling mists dissolve themselves in snow over the more elevated parts, and deluge all the lower grounds with torrents of rain. The inhabitants of the villages, separated by these raging torrents, are excluded from all communication with each other at this dismal period. The rains continue for about two months with extreme violence, and prevail at occasional intervals until April.

The climate of Calabria varies according to the character of the soil, and is consequently favourable to all sorts of produce. In the plains, sheltered against the north wind, there are found sugar-canes, aloes, and date-trees; while the pine and the birch cover the tops of the mountains. For four months, an excessive heat prevails all over the whole of the elevated parts, and particularly dur-

ing the sirocco. A burning wind then diffuses itself around, like inflamed vapour proceeding from the mouth of a furnace; it lights upon the shores of the kingdom of Naples, where it exercises the most malign influence, after having traversed the scorching deserts of Africa. All nature seems to languish while it prevails: it withers the herbs and plants, which however revive, together with man, the moment the wind changes to the north. Iced water and sea-bathing are the only means that can be effectually employed to give tone to the nerves, and relieve that lassitude which oppresses both the mind and body. The great variety and richness of the productions of Calabria furnish an abundance of all the necessaries of life. It has grain of every description; wines which might be rendered as good as those of Spain and Languedoc, if the inhabitants had more

most scrupulous care. These horses are of the middle-size, extremely swift, and full of fire and vigour. But the animal which is of most use in a country where communications are so difficult as in this —that animal, without which the inhabitants could neither collect their crops, nor transport their produce—is the mule; the beauty and strength of which are no less admirable, than its sagacity and steadiness in making its way through the most dangerous passes. In the marshy plains, buffaloes are met with in considerable numbers. The appearance of these animals is formidable, and their attack dangerous. When tamed, they are employed in labouring work. It is only by their aid, when they are harnessed to very high carts, that the inhabitants are enabled to effect a passage over the rivers. In all parts of Calabria there is a great quantity of game of every description.

The sea-coasts abound with fish: the sword-fish supplies food to a part of the inhabitants during several months of the year, and the tunny forms a lucrative branch of commerce.

These provinces, so highly favoured by their climate and productions, are deprived of the advantage of a good harbour. Still, however, before the war, they carried on a very considerable trade in corn, wine, silk, cotton, licorice, manna, oranges, lemons, chesnuts, and dried fruits; but their staple commodity was oil. This latter article constitutes at present the principal part of their commercial wealth, and supplies the soap manufactories of Marseilles and Trieste.

These exportations ought to produce opulence and comfort. Nature has done every thing for the country, but the vices of the government have marred its prosperity for many ages. The condition of

the peasants is most wretched: property is extremely disproportioned, there being in Calabria very few persons of moderate incomes. Small proprietors are very rarely to be met with, and in no country is there a more sudden transition from dire indigence to superabundant wealth. The consequence is that total want of emulation which is everywhere to be observed. The climate and the soil do more than half the work, and the hand of man defeats the execution of the remainder. Thus it happens, that productions of every kind are at this day in Calabria only the spontaneous gifts of Nature without any aid from art.

With the exception of a few cities, and some towns that are regularly built, all the other frequented places present the most miserable and disgusting appearance. The whole interior of their houses is a mass of revolting filth. The pigs live

familiarly with the inmates, and it often happens that infants in the cradle are devoured by them. These animals are of a particular species, and quite black: they are so numerous, that they obstruct all the streets and the approach to every house.

When we consider that ancient Greece has been, of all countries in the universe, the best peopled, the most civilized, and the best cultivated, it is impossible, in the present day, not to deplore the lot of so fine a country as this, condemned for ages to see itself perishing through each succeeding year, and becoming the abode of misery and pestilence. The rivers desolate the lands on which they border, and leaving in their course a noxious deposition of mud, infect a great part of the country, so that the inhabitants are obliged to abandon their ancient possessions. Earthquakes have also caused many melancholy changes;

every thing bears testimony to the cruel ravages occasioned by that of 1783. This frightful catastrophe, which has altered the aspect of these countries in an inconceivable manner, was first announced by the most appalling indications. Close, compact, and immoveable mists seemed to hang heavily over the earth: in some places the atmosphere appeared red-hot, so that it was every moment expected it would burst out in flames: the water of the rivers assumed an ashy and turbid colour, while a suffocating stench of sulphur diffused itself around. The violent shocks which were repeated at several intervals from the 5th of February to the 28th of May, destroyed the greater part of the buildings of farther Calabria. The number of inhabitants who were crushed under the ruins of their houses, or who perished on the strands of Scylla, was estimated at about 50,000. The rivers, ar-

rested in their course by the fall of mountains, became so many infected lakes, corrupting the air in all directions. Houses, trees, and large fields were hurried down together to the bottom of deep glens without being separated by the shock;—in short, all the extraordinary calamities and changes which can be effected by earthquakes were beheld at this deplorable period, under the various forms which characterised them.

After such convulsions of nature, it will not appear extraordinary that Calabria retains but few monuments which attest its grandeur and opulence as a colony founded by the ancient Greeks. The splendid and luxurious Sybaris was entirely destroyed by the Crotonians, who turned the course of two rivers upon the site which this superb city occupied. The celebrated Crotona, ravaged and razed in its turn, is at this day nothing better than a sorry

little hamlet, preserving in its vicinity as the only memorial of its ancient grandeur a single column of the temple of Juno Lacinia. Gerace, built on the ruins of the ancient Locri, has some remains which show how vast must have been the extent of a republic that was successively pillaged by every people it hastened to receive. But if the remains of antiquity spread over this classic land could have miraculously escaped the destroying hand of time, and the shocks of earthquakes, they must still have perished through the ignorance and barbarism of the Calabrians, the principal features of which shall form the subject of my next Letter.

LETTER XV.

CHARACTER AND MANNERS OF THE CALABRIANS.—THE TARENTELLA.—NOTICE RESPECTING THE ALBANIANS SETTLED IN CALABRIA.

MONTELEONE, JUNE 12, 1808.

BEFORE the French occupied Calabria it was subject to the immediate influence of rich and powerful Barons, who exercised over their vassals a despotic authority usurped upon the rights of sovereigns. Every thing which serves to render feudalism odious and opposed to the rights of humanity, fell particularly upon these provinces, to which little or no attention was directed on the part of the Government; and the inhabitants were thus prevented from making any advances in the arts and in civilization. The Barons kept up an armed militia, known under the name of

"Sbires," who were the passive agents of the will, and very often of the caprices, of their sanguinary masters. If it happened that a vassal questioned or resisted the behest of his lord, he soon fell by the poniard of some of the sbires, without any notice being taken of so atrocious a crime. No justice was executed; money purchased impunity for all crimes; every thing was venal, or only to be acquired by base subserviency. That class of persons who were more especially the victims of these arbitrary acts, sought refuge in the woods and mountains from the attacks of vengeance and the privileged dagger. From these haunts it is that those bands of robbers emerge, whose influence acts with such baneful depravity on the morals of the people, inspiring them with a taste for savage independence, and increasing their natural dislike to labour.

Calabria, then, cannot fail of deriving

benefit from a change of system. Thus, notwithstanding the violent measures taken to reconcile this country to a new form of government, and despite of all the devastations and excesses which have been the consequence, still the invasion of the French must be productive of great advantage in humbling the despotism of the Barons, in diminishing the vast number of atrocious prejudices, in imparting useful ideas of every kind, in facilitating communications by new routes, and finally, (the most essential of all the services which the French can render,) in endeavouring to extirpate brigandage. The finesse and subtlety of the Calabrians are truly astonishing. These qualities may in some respects be referred to their climate, and perhaps they have been inherited from the Greeks. Their language, which is a corrupt Italian, more unintelligible than that of the other provinces,

is full of originality and force. The uninformed classes express themselves in it with a facility, a spirit, and an animation of sentiment which would seem to indicate genius. According to the general practice of the Italians, their conversations are accompanied with a most significant pantomime. A sign, a gesture, a word, an exclamation, are all sufficient to make them perfectly understand each other. The whole frame is in motion when they have an interest in persuading those whom they address. Their manners are supple and insinuating; their minds very acute; and persons not acquainted with the perfidious arts which they are capable of practising, might easily become their dupes. Endowed with a rare talent of forming an accurate estimate of the character of each individual with whom they have any transactions, vile cheats, and gross flatterers, they know how to

bring into play all possible expedients in order to accomplish their ends; and if the ordinary means fail, a musket-shot, or a stab of a poniard, avenges them for their miscalculation. There are few persons among the Calabrians, of any class, from the highest to the lowest, who are not stained with many murders: a foul reproach, which is principally to be attributed to the neglect of the tribunals. The thirst of vengeance, which is perpetuated in families, and a strong propensity to litigation and chicanery, make a real hell of this fine country. These people have no true principle of religion or morals. Like all ignorant individuals, they are superstitious to excess. The most atrocious brigand carries in his bosom relics and images of Saints, which he invokes at the very moment he is committing the greatest enormities.

The Calabrians are of the middle size,

well-proportioned, and very muscular. Their complexion is swarthy, their features strongly marked, their eyes full of fire and expression. In common with the Spaniards, to whom they bear a strong resemblance, they are dressed at all seasons in large black mantles, which give them a sombre and lugubrious appearance. The crown of their hats is extremely high, terminating in a point, and has something fantastical and disagreeable to the eye about it. In consequence of the inveterate animosities by which families are divided, they never go out without being armed with muskets, pistols, poniards, and a sort of belt in the shape of a cartouch-box, which contains a great quantity of ammunition. Always prepared for attack or defence, they pass fiercely before their enemies; that is, before those who, they know, are watching for the very first opportunity to take away

their lives. Barricaded in their houses at nightfall, nothing but the most urgent business can make them stir out. The Calabrian who has become a brigand, and he who cultivates the soil, have so many relations in common, that they cannot well be distinguished from each other. Their manners, dress, and mode of arming are the same. The only difference is, that the brigand employs the fruits of his plunder in the purchase of a cotton-velvet waistcoat garnished with silver buttons, and in providing plumes and ribands to ornament his hat. Some bandit chiefs make a parade of luxury and dress. There are among them fellows who, boasting of having received military rank from the English, and the Court of Palermo, figure in a sort of scarlet uniform with epaulettes. They preserve control over their band by means of terror: disobedience or discontent is soon followed by a prompt and violent death.

There exists in the character of the Calabrians, even in those who, from their situation in life, ought to be enemies to disorder, a feeling of indulgence towards the brigands, which they themselves cannot account for; *sono povereti* (they are poor dèvils) is their common saying, with an air of pity; and if they dared, they would endeavour to excite our commiseration for the lot of these wretches. Except the indigent class employed in the cultivation of a soil which requires little or none, the people pass their time in complete idleness. They are to be seen going about enveloped in their treacherous mantles, under which they are armed at all points. They form groups and assemblages in the public places, and at the corners of streets, having nothing to employ their time except gaming, which is one of their ruling passions, and which rarely terminates without violent quarrels,

followed by some thrusts of the stiletto. They have no idea of social parties, and still less of the pleasures of the table. Their abstemiousness is carried to excess. Even opulent families deprive themselves of all the sweets of life, and think only of increasing their accumulations. Never are they seen animated with that spirit of gaiety in which on Sundays and holidays the people of other countries so freely indulge.

The peccorara and the tarentella are the dances peculiar to the country: this latter is generally adopted throughout the whole kingdom. The music accompanying it is extravagant and without melody: it consists of some notes, the movement of which is always increasing, till it ends in producing a convulsive effort. Two persons placed opposite each other make, like a pair of savages, wild contortions and indecent gestures, which terminate in a

sort of delirium. This dance, originating in Tarentum, has given rise to the fable of the tarentula, whose venom, it is pretended, can be neutralized only by music. Many respectable persons who have resided for a long time in the city of Tarentum, have assured me that they never witnessed any circumstance of the kind, and that it could only be attributed to the heat and insalubrity of the climate, which produce nervous affections that are soothed and composed by the charms of music. The tarentula is a species of spider that is to be found all over the south of Italy. The Calabrians do not fear it, and I have often seen our soldiers hold it in their hands without any bad effect ensuing.

The females of Calabria have few attractions, and are altogether devoid of the graces. Marrying very young, they very soon decay. Their fruitfulness is extra-

ordinary. Those sad accidents which so frequently attend parturition in northern countries, are unknown here. These females, even though moving in the better ranks of society, cannot, for the most part, either read or write. They are spoken of with eulogy when they have received the very first rudiments of education. In general, their condition is most unhappy. They are regarded with extreme jealousy by their husbands, who keep them shut up in their houses as close prisoners, and treat them neither with respect nor affection.

In the fifteenth century, a great number of Greek families, flying from the persecutions to which they were subjected after the death of Scanderbeg, prince of Epirus and Albania, took refuge in the kingdom of Naples, and principally in Calabria, where the government encouraged them to settle themselves, by giving

them grants of land covered with forests. The descendants of these refugees have preserved to this day the manners, language, and religion of their country, as also their original costume, which produces a remarkably agreeable effect by its richness and elegance. They are industrious, hospitable, and far from being addicted to brigandage. They know how to make themselves respected by the ferocious hordes that surround them, and against whom they are always on their guard. The harmony and peace that prevail among them might serve as a model for the country in which they have found an asylum.

The Calabrians are capable of being made excellent soldiers, from their robust constitutions, their great sobriety, activity, and quickness. If these people, isolated as they are from the rest of Europe, and entrenched behind impassable mountains

were actuated by a pure spirit of patriotism, political and religious, they would become invincible; and the country they inhabit might be rendered a sure and safe asylum against tyranny.

LETTER XVI.

THE CLIMATE OF CALABRIA DESTRUCTIVE TO THE FRENCH.—DEPARTURE FOR ROGLIANO.—THE ENGLISH CAPTURE AND BEAR OFF A FRENCH CONVOY.—THE BRIGAND CHIEF PARAFANTE.—HE FALLS INTO AN AMBUSCADE.—TRAIT OF PERFIDY.—APPEARANCE OF COSENZA IN THE HOT SEASON.—DEPARTURE OF KING JOSEPH FOR SPAIN.

ROGLIANO, JULY 29, 1808.

THE maladies produced by the bad air which prevails from the month of June in the bay of Gioia, where our troops have been employed in a harassing service, have occasioned our prompt departure for Rogliano. This summer the heat is excessive; it is the first we have spent in Calabria, and our soldiers, as well as those Frenchmen who have preceded them, have paid a melancholy tribute to this destructive climate. The diseases which it occasions are indicated by a sudden faintness, an

intolerable heat, and a continual delirium, which soon ends in death, unless an immediate remedy be applied. In the short space of fifteen days we have lost upwards of sixty men, and left two hundred sick in the hospital at Monteleone, which town the battalion quitted on the 30th of June.

The savage country which is traversed between Nicastro and Rogliano, and which, on our first march, we beheld covered with snow and mist, cannot be known again as the same in the fine season. Routes then quite impracticable become delightful walks, lined on each side with stately chesnut-trees, under the ample shade of which a pure and balmy air is breathed; limpid streams glide along through those deep valleys in which our course was impeded by raging torrents. The most elevated parts of the mountains afforded us an easy access, and the battalion reached its destination on the

2nd of July, without meeting with the slightest accident.

The environs of Rogliano are splendidly beautiful at this season. The land rising with a gradual ascent to the top of that vast platform, the Syla, presents on all sides a magnificent view. The mountains, arrayed in verdure of different tints, exhibit numberless villages and country-seats, which give a most animated appearance to this fine region. It would be difficult to find in any country a canton better peopled, more fertile, and better cultivated than this. It forms a happy exception to the rest of Calabria. It is in this district, where, during the summer, the most refreshing temperature and the purest air are enjoyed, that our troops quartered in the several villages, are to pass the whole of the hot season, in order to re-invigorate themselves. Still, however, the day after our arrival we were

obliged to march off again, and inhale the noxious vapours of the coast, for the purpose of witnessing a disastrous event, which it was not in our power to control.

A considerable flotilla, laden with the richest productions of Calabria, which were shipped at Pizzo for Naples, under convoy of some gun-boats, took refuge in a creek about twelve miles hence, where it waited for a favourable wind to proceed on its voyage. There was the more reason to apprehend an attack from the English cruisers, because the line of coast being extremely sickly at this season, is almost abandoned. On the 3rd of this month, at two o'clock in the morning, the Commandant received orders to send down a detachment of a hundred men to protect the convoy, and to march with the whole of the battalion so soon as a signal should be given that the English ships were in view. It was the more

necessary to be prepared for every contingency, since the south wind, which retarded the flotilla, might in a few minutes bring the enemy's vessels upon the coast. This just observation, made by a great number of the inhabitants, induced the Commandant, while consulting only the interests of the public service, to march down immediately with the whole of the battalion, for the purpose of occupying the heights above the beach until the flotilla should have sailed. The English, who had previously stood out to sea, approached the shore during the night, and at day-break, just at the very moment that we were starting from Rogliano, they landed five hundred men without any obstacle. The batteries could offer no effectual resistance. After a few useless shots were fired, and in less than two hours, all our ships were captured, and carried out to sea. The noise

of the cannon reaching our ears, quickened our march, but it took us three hours to arrive on the spot; and a vast number of seamen, whom we met flying away from it in a panic, too truly gave us to understand the nature of the disaster that had occurred there. On reaching the beach, we saw the English within gunshot, occupied in removing the merchandise on board their vessels; after which, they set fire to the whole of our ships, and bore away for Sicily. Judge of our mortification, on finding ourselves so close to them, without being able to bring them into action. This disastrous surprise has spread consternation throughout the whole country, and a long time must elapse before any ships will again venture to set out for Naples.

On returning to these mountains, we could not fail of coming quickly in contact with the brigands. You recollect,

that during our first sojourn at Rogliano, there was there a notorious bandit, named Francatripa, who carried desolation through the whole country. All other expedients being in vain resorted to in order to get rid of this formidable robber, some individuals of his gang were at last bought over, and they promised to deliver him up. The project, however, failed, and the wretch, thinking himself no longer safe among his associates in crime and outrage, sought a lurking-place in the woods of St. Euphemia, whence he has effected his escape to Sicily, carrying with him, it is said, treasure to a considerable amount. Parafante, another chief of the "Commitive," no less atrocious, has succeeded him, and by uniting the remains of Francatripa's gang to the band which he commands, has become even still more formidable. The season facilitating his attacks, he audaciously makes descents on

the villages which we occupy, and even pushes his nightly incursions as far as the entrance of Rogliano; so that, to protect the place against any sudden surprise from him, it is everywhere necessary to keep up a military guard.

After different expeditions had proceeded against this outlaw, without being attended with the desired result, the Commandant waited impatiently for some favourable circumstance which might bring him into his hands; when a neighbouring ecclesiastic came to him about fifteen days ago, and said, with a mysterious air, that he had some serious and important disclosures to make. He commenced by exhibiting a number of certificates from French officers, vouching for his good faith; and it afterwards appeared, that these individuals, abused by his profound hypocrisy and cunning, had given him their entire confidence. Then coming to

the object of his visit, he told the Commandant that he was the sworn enemy of Parafante, who was the murderer of many members of his family; he assured him that he had an understanding with several persons of his band, and promised that he would cause him to fall into our hands. He added, that Parafante was then staying in that part of the country, waiting the result of one of his notorious exploits; namely, the seizure of a rich proprietor, for whose ransom he demanded a thousand ducats. He farther assured him, that the money was to be paid that very night, and he proposed to take this favourable opportunity of laying so well-contrived a snare for the bandit as could not fail of securing him. It was agreed, then, that at ten o'clock at night a detachment of a hundred men should set off in silence, accompanied by a faithful guide. The Commandant, in directing me to give the

necessary orders for the expedition, concurred with me in the opinion that it would be imprudent, upon such slight grounds, to trust implicitly to this unknown individual. Being ordered to make some indirect inquiries respecting the truth of his story, I learned that he was generally known as a contemptible intriguer, and that no reliance whatever was to be placed upon him. It was then agreed that we should endeavour to sound the guide, who was to be sent forward to conduct the detachment. The moment he presented himself, we had recourse to stratagems and threats; and after making some pieces of gold glitter before his eyes, we discovered, beyond all doubt, that his master, being in the pay of the brigands, had no other object than to divert us away from Rogliano, in order to facilitate some profitable enterprise which Parafante sought to effect in our

neighbourhood. I went immediately with a detachment to the residence of this traitor, who was nowhere to be found; and his agent, bound with cords, was obliged, under the penalty of being shot, to lead us in the direction which the brigands were to take. At one o'clock in the morning the detachment placed itself in an ambuscade, where it lay concealed, observing the most profound silence. We soon heard a confused noise, which announced to us the approach of the brigands. When they had fairly come within gun-shot, the detachment fired a full volley, which killed and wounded a great number of them; attacked, then, with the bayonet, they took to flight, uttering the most frightful cries. Unfortunately, however, Parafante himself led another portion of his band by a different route; but the shots and cries of terror which he must have heard, had

the effect of making him abandon his enterprise. We found plenty of money on the greater part of the dead and wounded. A price has been set upon the head of the worthless and perfidious ecclesiastic, and sooner or later he is certain to fall into our hands, dead or alive. Parafante, believing himself betrayed by his confederates in crime, has not made his appearance here since this check, which has produced perfect tranquillity all over the country. Several of my brother officers and myself have taken advantage of the circumstance to make excursions in the neighbourhood, and particularly to Cosenza.

This town, so bustling, industrious, and commercial during the winter season, can now be compared to nothing but a vast teeming hospital. Tall emaciated figures, with sallow and livid countenances, are everywhere found stalking about, dragging on a miserable existence. The Chratis,

which flows through the lower part of the town, is considerably diminished in breadth in the summer season, leaving uncovered a mass of pestilential slime, the exhalation from which produces obstinate fevers, so that the wretched inhabitants who cannot quit this abode of infection are obliged to have recourse to the constant use of bark. But if the natives cannot habituate themselves to their climate, how much more must the French of necessity become victims to it! Last summer the 1st regiment of the line lost at Cosenza eight hundred men. From this melancholy experience of the place, the General of Division, Parthouneaux, who has deservedly succeeded General Maurice Mathieu in the chief command of Calabria, has ordered the garrison to evacuate the town and retire within the Castle which commands it, where, however, the troops are not entirely secure from bad air.

The journals will have informed you of

the departure of King Joseph. It is said here, that Napoleon intends the throne of Spain for him, and that this kingdom is to be united to France. The ladies of Naples will alone have cause to regret the removal of this gallant sovereign.

LETTER XVII.

PRECIPITATE DEPARTURE FOR ROSSANO AND CATANZARO.—ARMAMENT OF THE ENGLISH IN SICILY.

CATANZARO, AUGUST 18, 1808.

THE force of events has suddenly obliged us to quit our mountain quarters, where we should have derived so much benefit to our health from a longer sojourn. On the 7th of August, the battalion received orders to set out immediately for the district of Rossano, where very serious disturbances have broken out. This town, situated beyond the Syla, on the shores of the Ionian Sea, is three long days' march from Rogliano. To avoid passing through Cosenza, and to shun the unhealthy banks of the Chratis, we directed our march across the mountains, pursuing the line of villages

which succeed each other at frequent intervals upon the hills that surround Cosenza. The ground, which here rises in the form of a majestic amphitheatre, is extremely fertile. The pure and limpid waters which glide along under delightful shades, together with the light, invigorating breezes that play everywhere around, are highly conducive to health. But nature discloses all her treasures to a race of men whose ferocious minds are utterly insensible to her gifts. All the villages in this quarter pass under the common designation of Casali di Cosenza, (hamlets of Cosenza,) and send forth a multitude of brigands, who carry devastation through the province. Very frequently, in disturbed times, these formidable mountaineers pour down upon the town like a destructive torrent, committing ravages of every kind. Their violent competitions and inveterate enmities give rise to inter-

minable law-suits, which are frequently attended with atrocious murders. It is probably this disposition to knavery that supports at Cosenza a frightful number of notaries and attorneys, who consume whole fortunes in encouraging vexatious litigation.

The battalion halted on the night of the 7th at Spezzano-Grande, and the following day we began to ascend the mountains. We first passed through immense woods of chesnut-trees, then of oak, and of beech, and lastly, of the lofty pines which encompass the Syla. This quarter, which is intensely cold in winter and subject to violent storms, is surrounded by an impenetrable wood, which was known to the ancients by the name of the "Forest of Brutium." It was from this place that the Kings of Syracuse, and, after them, the Romans, drew materials for building their ships: the same object might be now at-

tained with great advantage, but that the timber cannot be felled unless by the accidental violence of hurricanes.

For five hours we pursued our way over an elevated plain, which, by a gentle descent conducted us to Acri, a populous town with a very extensive tract appertaining to it. Next morning we set out on our march for Rossano. From this high ground, which commands a vast expanse of sea, and from which, in the descent, a passage may be discerned through an immense forest, the eye is arrested with a variety of objects which at each succeeding moment awaken new sensations. On the one side are beheld frightful precipices suspended from the incumbent mountains, and on the other are perceived smiling valleys, beautiful villages, fine country-seats, and marine scenery of the most enchanting description. These noble forests, which the hand of man has never

yet denaturalized, possess a majestic and solemn character, that elevates the soul, and presents to it a picture truly primitive.

The battalion arrived on the 9th at Rossano, a well built and fortified town, situated upon an eminence at the foot of the mountains. We had to endure a suffocating heat, which was the more intolerable after having left a region of a very different temperature. Immediately on our arrival we received an order, at eleven o'clock at night, to proceed by forced marches to Catanzaro. The first inconvenience we experienced from this sudden command, was in procuring means of transport for the baggage, as also for such of the troops as were not able to march. The practice is to lay the communes under contribution for the purpose; but the moment that intelligence is spread abroad of any regiment receiving the route, the pea-

sants take care to conceal all their horses and other beasts of burden, by escaping with them into the mountains, in order to avoid a service which is often attended with great expense to the inhabitants. The Commanding officer, therefore, anticipating a difficulty that has frequently obliged us to leave our baggage behind, had been provident enough to secure every egress from the town; and then summoning the Syndic, ordered him to furnish the necessary supplies. This excited a great bustle through the surrounding country, and nothing was heard but the clattering of horses and mules galloping out of town in all directions; but from the precaution already taken, we secured so many that we were only embarrassed in the choice, and before two in the morning the battalion was completely on its march.

The distance to Cariati takes eight

hours. The route is level, but very sandy; and that part which faces the east burns with the heat of the sun at six o'clock in the morning. We arrived at noon, overpowered and exhausted. To guard against accidents, the battalion started at seven o'clock every evening. We marched to the minute, and making a long halt round the fires, which we lighted for the purpose of purifying the air, we were thus continually exposed to extreme heat.

We arrived yesterday at Catanzaro, worn out from fatigue, but particularly from the loss of sleep. The little rest we had by day was not sufficient for exhausted nature, and in nine successive days we completed a distance of a hundred and eighty miles, so that half the soldiers and officers fell sick, and there are not now more than three hundred men of the battalion who are fit for service. Our

greatest privation during these toilsome marches, was the want of any water that was drinkable. The torrents were all dried up—the springs failed, and our soldiers perishing with thirst, were obliged to slake it with the brackish and unwholesome water of the wells that are frequently met with along this coast. The bad air prevailing here, and the repeated devastations of pirates, have obliged the inhabitants to fix their abodes on hills, which are of difficult access; and this presented a new obstacle to our progress, at a moment when extreme fatigue rendered repose and refreshment so necessary to us. Sunrise, which presents so magnificent a spectacle on the sea-coast, had lost all charms to our eyes, now borne down with sleep. The moment that this grand luminary rose from the bosom of the ocean, the atmosphere appeared one mass of flame, and our faint and tottering

limbs lost all elasticity. Successive night marches, without a single day's rest, are among the most severe of all the privations which the soldier has to endure. The troops, falling asleep, tumbled down in groups, and the country being so very dangerous to stragglers, it was necessary to have recourse to blows, in order to make them continue their march.

The object which has caused our precipitate departure for Rossano has been a matter of discussion during the march, each interpreting it according to his own particular views. We had the more difficulty in divining it, since the crafty Calabrians, who are great politicians as well as great babblers, and who always receive intelligence before the French, gave us no hint upon the subject. At length, on our arrival at Catanzaro, we were informed that the English were fitting out an expedition in the ports of Sicily, but that the ob-

ject was not known, and that our troops, now mustering about four thousand fighting men, were to be concentrated near the bay of St. Euphemia, in order to be ready for all contingencies.

LETTER XVIII.

GOVERNMENT OF JOSEPH.—ARRIVAL OF JOACHIM MURAT, HIS SUCCESSOR TO THE THRONE.—DESCRIPTION OF CATANZARO.—AFFABILITY OF THE INHABITANTS.—CHARACTERISTIC TRAIT OF THE CALABRIAN PEASANTS.—ANECDOTES RESPECTING MELIZANO.

CATANZARO, SEPT. 20, 1808.

EVER since the departure of Joseph, we were lost in conjectures respecting the fate of this kingdom. Was it to be united to France? Was it to be governed by a viceroy? or was it to be made an appanage of some prince of the Imperial family? These were the questions generally asked. The arrival, however, of Murat, Grand Duke of Berg, now Joachim I. King of Naples and of Sicily, (so soon as he shall have conquered that island,) has proved that the latter sur-

mise was the best founded. He made his pompous and solemn entry into the capital on the 6th of this month.

This change of sovereign seems to conciliate all interests. The Neapolitans, happy that their country is allowed to remain a state independent of France, (but only to a certain extent, however,) offer incense to the new idol, and appear to feel a sort of pride at seeing themselves governed by a French General, whose name is associated with the most brilliant military exploits. They complain bitterly of Don Pepe (so they call Joseph in derision). The fact is, that at his departure he emptied all the public coffers; he has left trouble and disorder in the provinces, and the general administration of the kingdom was in the worst possible state under him. Totally devoted to those pleasures which the climate and manners of Naples render of such easy indulgence,

his reign has been that of an idle and gay monarch, who, with a vague desire to do good, has always wanted the judgment to prevent evil. With a disposition naturally mild and affable, still he has not by his departure excited any regret in the French army. Exhausting all the resources of the kingdom in foolish extravagancies, he has left a year's arrear of pay due to us, and our services are forgotten and neglected. All the French, therefore, gladly hail the arrival of Murat, hoping to find in him a zealous and powerful protector. His presence will, doubtless, produce an effect upon the English; and waiting the execution of the projects which they seem to meditate, we lead a very pleasant sort of life at Catanzaro. This is one of the finest towns of Calabria, and unquestionably the most agreeable to reside in. Its situation, on a mountain about two miles from the

sea, is healthy and pleasant; its inhabitants are affable and industrious; and I believe that this is the only town within the Apennines in which particular attention has been paid to the French. The ladies of Catanzaro are justly considered the most beautiful and most amiable of any in the two provinces. There are numerous parties at which music is performed, and they amuse themselves with innocent games, which allow of the fair sex being saluted on the lips—a freedom which, in other countries, would be decried as a scandal. But these pleasing manners are exclusively to be found within the walls. Outside them brigandage raises its hideous head, and, as in every other part of this country, ignorance and barbarism are the characteristics of the people. As an instance of the fact, I need only mention the following trait, which is strongly illustrative of the Calabrian peasant.

Eight days ago the company of voltigeurs of the battalion was ordered to attend the collector of contributions in going his rounds. About three miles from the town, a soldier left the party for a few minutes, and shortly afterwards a shot was heard, and a peasant being seen running across the fields, excited suspicion. Immediately, by orders of the Captain, some voltigeurs, laying aside their knapsacks, muskets, and cartouch-boxes, ran after the fellow, and overtook him. The wretch had just killed their comrade. Being asked the motive which could have urged him to such an atrocity, he answered with great *naïveté*, that having his gun loaded by him, and seeing this soldier present so good a mark, he could not resist the temptation of firing at him. Delivered up to the Military Commission, and condemned to death, he implored the mercy of his judges, offering at the same time

to serve faithfully in the place of the man whom he had assassinated. It did not appear that the conduct of this miscreant was influenced by any hatred of the French. The murder he committed was of the most cold-blooded description, and his only motive was to try the power of his gun and the strength of his powder. The Calabrians are then, indeed, a nation of assassins.

The battalion has four companies quartered in villages which are several leagues from the town. Having been directed to take orders to them, I learned, in the commune of Malissano, a very curious fact, and one little known, which took place in the year 1600, and caused a great deal of uneasiness at the Court of Madrid. I am indebted for it to the individual at whose house I was quartered,—a retired advocate, who was a man of large property and excellent information. The following is a

literal extract from an old chronicle which he gave me to read.

"Don Sebastian, King of Portugal (whose mother was daughter of the Emperor Charles V.) yielding to the irresistible impulse of an enterprising disposition, went to Africa at the age of twenty-one, with a numerous army, in order to support Muley-Mahemet, King of Fez and Morocco, whom his uncle had despoiled of his states. The Portuguese were entirely destroyed in one battle, and Philip II. King of Spain, who, upon the decease of Sebastian, was to inherit the Crown of Portugal, in the event of there being no direct heirs to the throne, was anxious to circulate a report that Sebastian was among the number of the slain. His body, which it was pretended had been found upon the field of battle, and ransomed from the infidels, was conveyed to Portugal, and interred at Belem, the place of sepulture of his ances-

tors. It appeared, however, that the unfortunate Sebastian, having escaped from his enemies, took refuge in the Holy Land, from which place he disembarked in Calabria in the habit of a pilgrim. Not daring to make himself known in a country belonging to Spain, he remained concealed for some time at Malissano, under the assumed name of Marco Tullio Cottissone. Weary of this obscure life, he embarked for Venice, to wait an opportunity of getting to Portugal; his secret having transpired, he was suddenly arrested and examined, when, although he adduced evident proofs of his being Don Sebastian, King of Portugal, he was still imprisoned as a common imposter. The Portuguese who were then at Venice contrived his escape in the disguise of a monk; but he was afterwards arrested at Florence, and the Grand Duke, who was devoted to Spain, sent him to Naples bound in chains. The Count de

Lemos, Viceroy of the kingdom, commanding him to be brought into his presence, was so struck with the air of grandeur and dignity of his prisoner, with the ease with which he delivered himself in the Portuguese language, and with the profound knowledge he displayed of all political matters connected with the Court of Lisbon, that deeming it right to make himself still more certain of his person, he kept him chained and confined in a dungeon till the arrival of the new Viceroy; the latter had him condemned to the galleys as an imposter possessed of the devil. The Duke of Medina Sidonia, ambassador at Lisbon during the reign of Sebastian, having expressed a wish to see this extraordinary personage, was, on beholding him, so confounded and moved by his appearance, that he retired bathed in tears. At last, the Court of Madrid, judging that the safest course would be to despatch this dangerous

prisoner, caused him to be executed in the Isle delle Femine, near Palermo." What must be thought of this most remarkable transaction? The Spanish writers, who make mention of it, being sold to the atrocious policy of Philip II. content themselves with saying, that the "village of Malissano, in Calabria, has given birth to an adventurer named Marco Tullio Cottissone, who, bearing a striking likeness to King Sebastian, wished to pass himself off as that prince, whose death had taken place in Africa." But how can it be conceived that a man, born in an obscure village of Calabria, while taking advantage of an accidental resemblance, could possess talents and knowledge sufficient to play the part with such perfection? The thing is not credible. No; if we find the ambitious and implacable Philip dooming his own son to death, we cannot be surprised that he sacrificed the King of Portugal to his barbarous policy.

The good air of Catanzaro has restored our invalids. Those who were in the hospital at Monteleone, have now joined us, and the battalion once more assumes a military attitude.

LETTER XIX.

THE ENGLISH EXPEDITION DIRECTED TOWARDS SPAIN.—ROUTE FROM CATANZARO TO ROSSANO.—DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY, ANCIENT AND MODERN.—HANNIBAL'S CASTLE.—COTRONE.—CAPO DEL COLONNE.—TEMPLE OF JUNO LACINIA.

ROSSANO, OCT. 17, 1808.

THE English expedition, detained in the ports of Sicily by the violence of the equinoctial gales, has at length set sail, and must be amused at finding us put upon the alert along the whole coast of Calabria. As it appeared from the signals made as far as Cape Vaticano, that the enemy wished to enter the bay of St. Euphemia, immediate orders were issued for all the troops to proceed to the heights of Maida. On arriving there, on the night of the 4th of October, we descried the

English squadron tacking along, within two leagues of the shore. We fully expected it would effect a landing during the night, but at daybreak it had entirely disappeared. We remained, however, in the same position, till we were assured that the expedition was no longer visible from any part of the coast. The general impression now is, that it has directed its course towards Spain. All our troops have, therefore, resumed their former cantonments; and on the 7th of October, the battalion was ordered to return to Rossano, by the same route it had taken two months before. The atmosphere being refreshed by the rains, which fall so abundantly in September, and the earth being clothed with new verdure, our march has been nothing but a delightful promenade, and I am now enabled to make you acquainted with this interesting region, which I had

lately traversed, I might almost say, while asleep.

On leaving Catanzaro, we halted for the night at Cropani; a considerable town, the local situation of which is charming, but the internal economy of the place does not by any means correspond with it. Some miles from Cropani we passed through a vast uncultivated plain, which supplies abundant pasture to the numerous herds and flocks that are driven down from the Syla to remain there during the winter. Our way lay close to a rock, situated on the sea-shore, and surmounted with a tower, called Torre-di-Annibale. At the base of this rock there existed in ancient times a harbour, where, according to all historians, Hannibal embarked on his return to Africa. The tower that bears his name, encompassed by a great number of dilapidated buildings, presents at a distance the appearance of a castle

commanding the town. This is one of those ancient places which earthquakes had destroyed many centuries ago. I could never discover the original name by which it was designated. The recollections connected with Hannibal in his retreat into the country of the Brutii, when fortune proving faithless to him, and being abandoned by his country and his allies, he still held out against the Romans, can alone give an interest to a spot which is equally savage and picturesque.

We halted on the 12th at Cotrone, and I took advantage of the occasion to make a visit to Capo del Colonne. This place, known to the ancients under the name of the promontory of *Lacinium*, was celebrated for the school of Pythagoras, and also for the temple of Juno Lacinia, which attracted from Italy and Greece a great number of votaries. Enriched by their offerings and pious sacrifices, it was deco-

rated with the most costly and precious ornaments, among which was a column of massive gold. The Romans accuse Hannibal of being the first to destroy this monument, which has been instanced as one of the finest of all those pieces of splendid architecture that have owed their origin to the genius of Greece. Historians affirm, that when this formidable enemy of Rome came to the resolution of embarking for Carthage, he assembled in the temple the leaders of that small band of adherents who still remained faithful to him in the hour of adversity, and sought to prevail upon them to follow him. Fearing, however, after they had refused, that they might be induced to impede his departure, he had the cruelty to cause them all to be massacred by his African soldiers, who afterwards pillaged and burned down this magnificent temple, of which nothing now remains except a single column surround-

ed with ruins, which are half covered with the waters of the sea.

In taking a general survey of Cotrone, I looked in vain for any ruins which could show the vast extent of the ancient *Crotona*. The few that remained have been carried off to serve as materials for building an indifferent harbour; a work commenced a long time ago, and which when completed, will never prove of any advantage to commerce.

The greatness and renown of *Crotona* are mainly to be ascribed to Pythagoras, the legislator and reformer of ancient Greece. It was in consequence of his wisdom and enlightened views, and also of the sedulous care with which he propagated his doctrines, that the different small states, of which this country was then composed, were enabled to attain a degree of celebrity to which, from their extent, they could never have presumed

to aspire. The philosopher, attracted by the beauty of the environs of *Crotona*, and the salubrity of the climate, fixed his residence there. This city, though of ancient origin, was of very little note before his arrival. However, by his wise and prudent institutions, the Crotonians soon became the admiration of all Greece. Their sobriety, their temperance, their disinterestedness, were proverbial. Crotona rose to be a flourishing state: its circumference comprised a space of twelve miles; and its population was so great, that it could send a hundred thousand men into the field. It was the only one of all the Greek colonies that afforded succour to the mother country during the Persian invasion.

But the victory which Crotona gained over the Sybarites became fatal to her. The vices and effeminacy which she sought to destroy were introduced into her bosom.

Vanquished by the Locrians, who treated her with a degree of severity much less barbarous than that with which she herself had treated the Sybarites, she rapidly hastened to her fall. When Hannibal appeared before the walls of this once renowned city, its population was so much reduced that no resistance whatever was offered to him. After this great captain had retired from the country, the Romans sent to Crotona a colony, that was ravaged in succession by all the barbarous people who have devastated Italy.

Charles V. wishing to erect a fortress here, had a castle built, and surrounded the city with a wall, which now forms the gloomy enclosure of Cotrone. The inhabitants of the place do not exceed three thousand souls. They are wasted away by misery and the diseases occasioned by the stagnation of those waters which once fertilized their fine plains. The vast region

around, though ill-cultivated, still produces a great quantity of corn, which, together with cheese, forms a considerable branch of trade with Trieste.

We set out on the 13th for Ciro, and, after crossing an extensive plain covered with briars and brambles, we passed along the rising ground above Strongoli; a small town situated on the side of a rock. It was in ancient times called *Petilia*, and built by Philoctetes. It was in its neighbourhood that Marcellus, the illustrious rival of Hannibal, lost his life. A wealthy inhabitant of Rossano, profiting by our march to Cotrone to return in safety to the part of the country where he resided, induced us to halt at this place, in order to avail ourselves of a spring which is to be found within a short distance of it. How delicious would this fresh and pure water have been to our burning palates, if we had had the good fortune to dis-

cover it on our former march. It issues from the earth with force sufficient to turn a mill, but not far from its source it loses itself in the sands. Our travelling companion, a very well-informed man, told us that this spring was celebrated for having given rise to the battle in which Marcellus lost his life. Situated between the positions respectively occupied by the Romans and the Carthaginians, it occasioned several conflicts, in one of which the Roman General was slain.

We afterwards reached the little town of Ciro, built on the top of a mountain. Next day we traversed woods filled with brambles, then passed over some uncultivated plains, and from these got into an olive plantation, which leads to Cariati,—a dismal place, the inhabitants of which are obliged to surround themselves with thick walls, as a protection against pirates.

The following day we pursued our

route between the sea and some lofty mountains, over a plain overgrown with olives, which were planted, without any regularity, in the same manner as forest-trees. The day before yesterday, the battalion entered Rossano, after having passed through a country where, at every step, are found the most precious recollections of antiquity, — recollections now obliterated on a shore rendered desolate by bad air, and by earthquakes, and the population of which, reduced to extreme misery, is diminished in the course of each succeeding year.

Having had an opportunity of rendering some slight services to this inhabitant of Rossano, whom I have mentioned to you, I have been urgently pressed by him to fix my quarters at his house, and have every reason to felicitate myself on his obliging attention. He has one of the finest collections of Latin, Italian, and

French books, that any private gentleman can possibly possess. Having been for a long time a distinguished advocate at Naples, he acquired a knowledge of the French language, which he speaks with difficulty, but writes with correctness, and even with elegance. He has shewn me, in confidence, his private library, composed of our best philosophical works, the introduction of which was prohibited by the old government, under a severe penalty.

The battalion was ordered in the month of August last to come to this place, in consequence of a revolt which broke out in the canton of Longo-Bucco. The inhabitants, having refused to pay the contributions, drove away the collector, after having killed several soldiers of his escort. A detachment of two hundred men has therefore been marched against them; but this force is by no means sufficient to explore the strong-holds of mountains which,

according to all accounts, are impassable. As the English armament in Sicily took place in the mean time, it was necessary to concentrate the division, so that this revolt remains unpunished. But now that the troops are disposable, the government is determined to resume its rights, and before extreme measures are resorted to, it has been thought advisable to try the effect of gentle means. We wait the result

LETTER XX.

EXPEDITION AGAINST THE INSURGENTS OF LONGO-BUCCO.—DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY.

LONGO-BUCCO, Nov. 12, 1808

I NOW write to you from the most savage country of the Apennines, after an attack of a truly military character, and the first of the kind that we have made in Calabria. All means of accommodation having failed, in consequence of the obstinacy of the rebels, to whom I adverted in my last letter, the battalion received orders to march for the purpose of reducing them. Longo-Bucco being the very focus of the insurrection, we proceeded to march upon this point, and, on the 1st of November, five hundred and sixty men, divided into two columns, set out at daybreak, ma-

nœuvring so as to arrive suddenly in the centre of the insurgent villages.

Longo-Bucco is fifteen miles from Rossano. The approaches leading to it are frightful, and commanded on all sides by lofty mountains. To guard against falling into ambuscades, our guides, who were highly remunerated by the receiver of the contributions of the *arrondissement*, conducted us with caution and acuteness through immense forests, where you meet nothing but herds of deer and roebucks, the only inhabitants of these solitary wilds. About three o'clock in the afternoon, we arrived at the place appointed for our rendezvous. The second column was already on the spot, and expected us with the more impatience, as the bells of all the surrounding villages had sounded the alarm. Shortly afterwards, a crowd of armed peasants came and took possession of a mountain which commands

the whole country. Our preparations for attack were soon made; and the very moment our formidable charge was heard, the affrighted multitude took to their heels in the greatest confusion. Before night-fall, we reached an eminence from which you see Longo-Bucco, situated in a narrow deep valley, that has in its centre a furious torrent tumultuously rushing over enormous rocks. The gigantic wooded mountains which surround this dreadful region, give to it a gloomy and savage character, that overwhelms the mind with sadness. This town contains a hideous population of three thousand souls, composed of nailers, smiths, and charcoal-burners. The old government employed them in working the silver-mines, situated in the vicinity, and which are now given up. We passed the night upon the heights, establishing an extensive line of fires, in order to impress them with

an idea that we had a large force. For a considerable time a wild confusion prevailed in the valley. Shrieks of terror resounded on all sides, the inhabitants fearing, no doubt, that we should come down upon them during the night with fire and sword, endeavoured to secure both their persons and property. At daybreak, detachments occupied the summits of all the neighbouring mountains, and afterwards two hundred men descended into the village. All the inhabitants had evacuated it during the night, with the exception of a few old men and the curate; the latter had come to meet us for the purpose of imploring our humanity, and the clemency of the Commandant; who earnestly impressed upon him the necessity of using all the influence of his ministry in inducing the inhabitants to lay down their arms and return to their houses, these being the only

conditions which could save them from pillage. By degrees the greater part returned, and tranquillity was soon re-established in this quarter. However, the two chiefs of the insurrection still held out; the Commandant, hoping to bring them to terms, wrote to them to the effect, that if they would dismiss their bands, they might meet him in perfect security. Seeing that they still persisted in revolt, he determined to proceed and attack them in a village where a numerous body of rebels had assembled. To carry his plan into execution, he set out on the evening of the 5th, with four hundred men, pretending that he was going towards Bochigliero; but on the approach of night, suddenly changing his route, he conducted us by a rapid and well-combined movement to the point occupied by the insurgents, who very fortunately had no intimation of our advance. The village where they had

taken refuge was surrounded without the least noise, and at daybreak we marched to attack it. This village, hanging like an eagle's nest from the verge of a rock, is commanded by a mountain, which, nevertheless, renders it accessible. While we were endeavouring to parley with the insurgents, who answered our words of peace with musket shot, a great tumult was heard in the village. It was occasioned by the unexpected appearance of about twenty of our soldiers, who had just entered it, after having climbed over rocks which were almost inaccessible. In an instant the cry of "storm!" "storm!" was heard on all sides. We hastened to the village, which is in a great part surrounded by a high wall, and, in spite of a very hot fire, which in a few minutes killed or wounded more than twenty men, the gate was broken down by the sappers, the soldiers spread through the streets like an

overwhelming torrent, and then commenced a horrible massacre, which was rendered inevitable by the obstinacy of the insurgents, who kept up an incessant fire from all the houses. This unfortunate village, sacked and burned, experienced all the horrors inseparable from a place taken by storm. The curate, a great number of women, children, and old men, luckily effected their escape into a church, to which a party of officers had repaired for the purpose of protecting this asylum from the brutality of the soldiers. Our loss in this affair has been considerable; but that of the insurgents, who are now almost destroyed, is upwards of two hundred men. A great number, hoping to save themselves by climbing up the rugged back of the mountain, perished in the attempt; but unfortunately, the principal persons having succeeded in effecting their escape, we were obliged

to go immediately in pursuit of them, in order to prevent fresh machinations on their part; and the detachment marched upon Bochigliero, a large town, better situated and more populous than Longo-Bucco, but which still had taken an active part in these disturbances. The news of our success had already reached this place. The inhabitants, thrown into consternation, hastened to send to us a deputation, composed of all the leading authorities, and the most influential individuals of the country. The Commandant, wishing to avail himself of the first moment of terror to disarm this commune, threatened to send the whole deputation as a hostage to the Castle of Cosenza, if all the arms in the country were not surrendered. In less than one hour afterwards three thousand stand were given up and burned. A hundred men have remained at Bochigliero, and we have returned to Longo-

Bucco. To render this painful victory complete, nothing has been wanting but the capture of the principal leaders of the insurrection. A price is set upon their heads. Within the last two days we have been joined by a whole swarm of subordinate employés, who have come for the purpose of raising taxes in the canton in every possible way. They run over the country guarded by detachments, that meet no resistance. I shall avail myself of their return to Rossano to forward this letter, for never yet has post penetrated into this region, which presents the very image of chaos. We see nothing but mountains rising in confused piles, and terminating in a peak; huge rocks, which threaten to demolish from the foundation the houses beneath them, and torrents which roar from the bottom of deep and gloomy glens.

LETTER XXI.

Sequel of the Expedition against Longo-Bucco.—An Anecdote.—Taking of the Isle of Capri.

Rossano, December 13, 1808.

Within eight days after our arrival at Longo-Bucco, tranquillity was completely restored in every part where the insurrection had broken out. However, the General commanding the province feared that fresh disturbances might take place if the troops were withdrawn before the two great leaders of the revolt were arrested, and he therefore ordered the Commandant to continue to hold military occupation of the canton until these persons were given up either dead or alive. An incident occurred on this occasion, which places the craft and perfidy of the Cala-

brian character in a striking point of view.

At Rossano we were all acquainted with a little Abbot, who had a jolly round paunch, and was animated, intelligent, and amusing. Being on very friendly terms with some of our officers, he accompanied us to Longo-Bucco, offering to render us any service in his power, as he had a perfect knowledge of the country. Having been employed in some affairs, in the management of which he evinced considerable zeal and great ability, he soon gained the entire confidence of the Commandant. This wily friar told him one day, that if he would entrust him with the charge of a detachment, he would undertake to arrest the two individuals whose seizure was a matter of so much importance. He said he knew them to be concealed at a farm within some leagues of the spot, and he

desired, at the same time, that, to ensure his personal safety, he might be allowed to march in the ranks disguised in the dress of a soldier. The Commandant, far from suspecting any perfidy, eagerly adopted a project which presented great chances of success. Behold then, we soon set about transforming our little Abbot into a soldier, laughing most heartily at this masquerade scene. No part of the uniform belonging to the lowest-sized voltigeur could be found to fit him. The great coat trailed down to his heels, the schakos covered his ears, the cartouch-box descended to his hams, and he bent under the weight of the musket, which his delicate hands scarcely dared to touch. Every thing, however, was soon adjusted for him, and the wag, completely disguised, set off in high glee, with a detachment of five-and-twenty men, under the command of an officer. After leading

our soldiers about from village to village, through dreary fastnesses and in dreadful weather, and after making them lie concealed for a whole day in a wood, he resumed his black dress, under the pretext that he was going to look out for some information, and immediately disappeared. We now learned that all his trickery had no other object than to levy contributions in the name of the Commandant on all the most wealthy proprietors in the neighbourhood. The indignation of the officer and the Commandant may be easily imagined, since their honour might be compromised under circumstances of such vile deception. The description of this arrant knave has been sent about in all directions, and woe be to him if he should fall into our hands.

In the mean time we spent an entire month in scouring the country to no purpose, and a longer stay at Longo-Bucco

became more and more insupportable. We were enveloped in snow and thick mists, rain fell in torrents, inundating the narrow valley which we occupied, so that all communication from house to house was intercepted. To accelerate our departure from this frightful wilderness, we adopted fresh measures of severity; thus increasing the discontent of the people, by forcing them to pursue with the utmost rigour the authors of all their evils. Finding that they could not get rid of us except by giving them up, they went to work with so much earnestness, that on the 6th of this month, the Commandant was startled by the serjeant of the guard, who entered his bed-room at daybreak, accompanied by two men, each of whom held by the hair a head reeking with gore. Rising suddenly from his couch, he was filled with horror on beholding this hideous spectacle: the two

chiefs had fallen that very night into a snare which had been artfully prepared for them, and had thus become victims to the cowardly treachery and reckless cruelty of their own partisans. Their identity having been sufficiently established, the death of the principal actors terminated this bloody tragedy, and we retired from these Apennine catacombs, to enjoy once more the light of the sun.

On our return to Rossano, an officer coming from Naples furnished us with most interesting particulars respecting a glorious exploit which has signalized the accession of Murat to the throne. The Isle of Capri, famous for the debaucheries and cruelties of Tiberius, is a steep rock, fortified both by art and nature. Situated at the entrance of the Bay of Naples, the English, who had taken possession of it, intercepted all our communications by sea, and caused their stately ships to ad-

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vance even under the guns of the forts of the capital. Twice already in the reign of Joseph had the French in vain attempted to retake this little Gibraltar, as it is called by the English. This undertaking presented the greatest difficulties, and Murat succeeded in carrying the place by one of those daring efforts which characterise his fortune and his extraordinary valour. It is beyond all doubt one of the finest exploits on record. Our troops having arrived at noon upon the beach in small boats, were enabled to establish a position on the isle, only by climbing up one by one, under the enemy's fire, perpendicular rocks from eighty to a hundred and fifty feet high. Field-pieces of from twelve to twenty-four pounders, were also conveyed to the place with more than human efforts; and in order to batter the principal fort, it was necessary to carry this artillery by the hands of men to the

highest point of the island, which rises seven hundred toises above the level of the sea. The General of Division, Lamarque, commanding this brilliant expedition, being determined either to conquer or die, gave orders to send away all the boats as soon as the troops, to the number of five thousand men, had landed. A few days afterwards, the enemy's fleet surrounded the island, and our troops became, at one and the same moment, the besiegers and the besieged. In a short time, the want both of ammunition and provisions placed the French in a most critical situation; and they were on the point of surrendering, when fortunately a sudden gale having arisen, compelled the English to depart for the moment, and our gun-boats succeeded in entering with the necessary supplies. At length, after thirteen days of the most arduous toil, the English, driven from all the forts, were

obliged to abandon the island in sight of their own vessels, which were bringing a reinforcement, that did not venture to land. Never was enterprise more difficult, or conducted with more intrepidity and success. This event, most fortunate for the capital, whose commerce had become quite paralysed, gives great *éclat* to the King in the opinion of his new subjects, and enhances the brilliancy of his fame in the estimation of the French.

LETTER XXII.

Departure for Corigliano.—Beauty of its Environs.—The Situation of Sybaris.—Notice respecting this ancient City.—Its Destruction.—The present State of the Country.

Corigliano, Jan. 18, 1809.

I was never more struck with the astonishing contrasts which Calabria presents, than on quitting the dark and dreary perspective of the mountains of Longo-Bucco, to dwell upon the plains of the ancient Sybaris, formerly so fertile and so delightful. A few days after our return to Rossano, the battalion took up its winter quarters between this latter town and Cassano; thus occupying some of the Eastern parts of Calabria, washed by the waters of the Bay of Tarentum. Corigliano being situated in the centre

of the cantonments, the staff of the battalion was ordered to establish itself there, with the two companies of *élite*. You arrive from Rossano, after crossing a beautiful plain, which, at this season, still presents all the charms of spring. Light rains falling at occasional intervals, keep up a vegetation rendered active by the heat of the sun, which, in this happy clime, never loses its influence. The population of the environs spreads itself during the winter over these rich tracts, whose beauty increases in proportion as you approach Corigliano. This little town, with a population of about five thousand souls, rises in the form of an amphitheatre, upon a hill, commanded by a fine castle, which seems destined to protect all the treasures in its immediate neighbourhood. On all sides you behold extensive plantations of oranges and lemons, with cedars, in an infinite variety of shades and

forms. This is, next to Reggio, the most delightful spot in all Calabria, and that part of the country which abounds most in natural productions of every kind. The interior of the town, however, which you pass through in order to ascend to the castle, does not, by any means, harmonize with the splendid scenery around it. Its narrow, dirty streets, and dismal, squalid-looking houses, present an appearance of revolting misery, in the midst of so much wealth. It contains, at the same time, some fine mansions, belonging to opulent families, with whom we live upon very friendly terms.

The Duke of Corigliano was one of the richest noblemen of this province, and one of the most formidable to his unfortunate vassals. The castle which he inhabited during some months of the year, and which we now occupy, forms a square, flanked with massive towers, and surround-

ed with a broad trench, excavated from a rock. The entrance is by a drawbridge, and the place may be regarded as a little citadel. The officers and soldiers are everywhere lodged very comfortably. Our apartments are situated on a magnificent terrace, where we enjoy one of the finest views that all Italy can command. It takes in the whole extent of the Bay of Tarentum, the highest pinnacle of the Apennines, the vast plain in the midst of which the ancient Sybaris had stood, and all round the town there are rich farms and country-houses, encompassed with a profusion of those plants and shrubs which we keep in our conservatories, as rare ornaments of the vegetable kingdom. We had scarcely arrived, when all the principal inhabitants came to pay their respects to us, supplying us at the same time with an abundance of the best provisions which the country affords. Meanwhile, we inti-

mated to them our desire to go over the ground where the celebrated Sybaris had once existed in all its luxurious grandeur, and we set out the following morning, favoured by one of those fine winter days, of which the climate of Provençe can convey but a faint idea.

Sybaris, so renowned in history for its voluptuous delights and its misfortunes, was the most ancient as well as the most flourishing of those colonies which the Greeks had founded on the coasts of Italy. The mildness of its climate, the fertility of its soil, and its position between two very considerable rivers, the Chratis and the Sybaris, (now called the Cocillo,) served to render it one of the most opulent cities of antiquity. Its numerous population, united to that of the other colonies which it had founded in the neighbourhood, enabled it to keep up an armed force of three hundred thousand men. Enriched by

agriculture, by the arts, and by commerce, it held for a long time a predominant influence over all the coasts of *Magna-Græcia*. The medals, statues, and ancient vases which have survived its ruin, prove that the arts were carried here to the highest pitch of perfection. The effeminate mode of living of the Sybarites became proverbial, and we find some instances stated of their habits which are scarcely credible. Abandoned to all sorts of voluptuousness, sacrificing every thing to momentary gratification, their sole employment consisted in sensual indulgence. But luxury and effeminacy, the inseparable attendants on extreme wealth, while corrupting their morals, at the same time hastened their utter destruction. History, in pointing out the epoch of the ruin of this republic, does not record the motives which caused its enemies to effect it. Five hundred and sixty-eight years before the

Christian æra, the Crotonians marched against the Sybarites, commanded by the famous athlete Milo, armed and arrayed as Hercules, and crowned with the prize which he had borne off at the Olympic Games. The Sybarites sent three hundred thousand men into the field, and the two armies came into action on the confines of their respective territories, which were separated by the *Hilias*, now called Trionto, a torrent flowing between Rossano and Cariati. The Crotonians gained a signal victory, exterminating the greater part of their enemies, and razing Sybaris to the foundation. The dykes which confined the two rivers having been broken down, the impetuous rush of their combined waters soon destroyed all the buildings that came in the way. The few inhabitants who survived these terrible disasters retired to some distance, where they built the city of *Thurium*, which is

supposed to be the Tersa-nuova of the present day.

So complete was the destruction of Sybaris, that no one trace of that magnificent city is now remaining. The two rivers, which at once ornamented and fertilized its fine plains, have transformed it into a foul marsh, which, during the hot weather, exhales the most pestilential vapours. Never, in any part of the globe, has there been witnessed a metamorphosis more extraordinary, a change more deplorable,—so much so that, despite of the historical certainty of the city having stood here, still to an ordinary observer its existence in such a place might appear a physical impossibility. However, in examining the numberless local beauties of the country, the imagination delights to associate them with Sybaris; for it would be very difficult to find any situation more truly delightful. Stupendous mountains, covered with

towns and villages, surround a vast plain, irrigated both with fresh and salt-water, which, after flowing for some distance into the interior of the country, forms an immense basin that completes this splendid work of nature. The whole of this extensive region is now in the possession of the Dukes of Cassano and Corigliano. That part of the land which is not inundated, produces grain in abundance; and those districts which are uncultivated, bring forth the licorice-root without any effort of man. The remaining portions consist of pasture lands, extending an immense way, and covered, during the winter, with innumerable herds and flocks. Horses and mules are met with in vast numbers, and the greatest care seems to be taken in breeding them. The race-horses of the Duke of Cassano are deservedly held in high estimation through the kingdom. After having spent

part of the day in exploring this quarter, which abounds so much in interesting recollections, we were conducted to a large farm belonging to the Duke of Corigliano. Here we were most hospitably entertained by his agent, who next day treated us to a grand hunting-party. I shall take another opportunity of mentioning to you the jolly life we lead in this town, the inhabitants of which seem to take delight in paying us all those attentions which their former Lord could never receive from them without constraint.

LETTER XXIII.

AFFABILITY OF THE INHABITANTS OF CORIGLIANO. — THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY AND ITS PRODUCTIONS.

CORIGLIANO, FEB. 27, 1809.

THE effeminate race of the Sybarites became conspicuous in ancient times for politeness and hospitality. These qualities seem naturally referable to a kindly soil and fine climate. Were we to judge of the feeling evinced towards us here by the manner in which our table is furnished, we might fairly say, that never were military men better off in country quarters. The plains and forests supply us with game of every kind; the sea, which is only a short distance from the town, sends us a variety of excellent fish; and we are importuned to accept wines

of the most delicious flavour: in short, Corigliano has absolutely proved to us a modern Sybaris. But that which particularly heightens our enjoyment is, that we no longer hear one word said about brigandage.

This town took part in the general insurrection which broke out after the battle of St. Euphemia, and even wished to offer some resistance since the retreat of General Regnier—a circumstance which caused several houses to be pillaged and burned down. A great number of the inhabitants afterwards gave themselves up to brigandage; but their chief, who was one of the old retainers of the Duke, having been taken and hanged, the band which he commanded dispersed, and the parties were allowed to return to their homes, under the sanction of an amnesty. The consequence is, that for more than a year back this canton has enjoyed per-

fect security. To such a pitch is the passion for the chase carried in this country, that we find ourselves every day in the field, attended by the principal inhabitants. All the people here take delight in this amusement; and to prevent them from indulging in it, their former despotic Lord used to send to the galleys every individual who dared to contravene his prohibitory mandates. As game absolutely swarms in this quarter, eating up the produce of the land, we do good service in destroying it. I doubt if there is any country in Europe which furnishes so great a variety of all kinds. We set out on horseback at daybreak, supplied with an abundant store of excellent provisions, and followed by a numerous pack of hounds. They are of a breed peculiar to Calabria, and known by the name of "Braccofocato." We generally spend two or three days in

hunting over the plains of Sybaris, and through the forests of the Apennines. The most picturesque spots are chosen for our occasional halts, and our repasts are always seasoned with a keen appetite. Our nights are passed at the farm-houses in the most jovial manner, and we return to our quarters followed by vehicles of all sorts, and mules laden with wild boars, roebucks, deer, hares, pheasants, mallards, and wild geese, together with foxes and wolves, of which we have already killed an immense number.

In addition to the usual field-sports, there is here an extraordinary chase, which is that of wild bulls. Between the Chratis and the Cocillo, where once rose the stately edifices of Sybaris, there is a vast plain, covered with excellent pasture, and surrounded by a marsh, which can only be approached by sea. Here they propagate a breed of bulls and oxen, which

live in a state of nature, being distinguishable by no marks, and having no herdsmen to attend to them. The hunting of these animals, though requiring little dexterity, is still fraught with danger. A young man, a resident of Corigliano, who was pursued by a wounded bull, must inevitably have been gored to death, if some expert chasseurs, attracted by his cries, had not succeeded in killing the furious animal.

We often make parties of pleasure to Cassano, a small town, fifteen miles distant from Corigliano, well-built, delightfully situated, and where there are hot-baths that are looked upon as a sovereign remedy for rheumatism. The Chevalier de Serra, brother of the Duke, resides continually in the town, where he does the honours of his mansion, and received us with much politeness. To proceed to Cassano, you must pass the Chratis.

This river, abandoned for ages to its impetuous and irregular course, does not allow of any sort of bridge being constructed over it; and an attempt has been made to supply the place of one by means of an enormous waggon drawn on two wheels, and surmounted with a kind of stage, which is elevated in proportion to the depth of the water. This rolling bark stands in waiting at the river-side, and as soon as a sufficient number of passengers is found assembled, the driver, with shrill cries raised to the top of his voice, brings together a pair of the tallest buffaloes that can be met with, and, plodding to the muddy swamp, they submit themselves to his yoke with the greatest docility. Harnessed to this heavy machine, which is loaded with persons and goods, they sluggishly drag it along to the other side. No small degree of alarm is naturally excited lest it may be over-

turned in the midst of the water, as the wheels sinking alternately at the bottom, cause a most uneasy motion. To increase the general anxiety and embarrassment, horses must be led by the bridle, swimming along, and scarcely able to resist the violence of the current. I have really never crossed this river without fearing that it might realize in my case the passage of Acheron.

One of the greatest sources of trade in the Duchy of Corigliano, consists in the making of licorice juice. In the month of November they pluck up this plant by the roots, and dry it in stoves. Then it is put into a mill, which reduces it to shreds resembling tow; after this it is placed in a cauldron of boiling-water, whence it passes into another that brings it to the consistence necessary for its being made up in the form of sticks, as it is sent to foreign countries.

Nature would seem to have studiously furnished this region with all sorts of productions, even such as are not met with in the most favoured climates. The mountains adjacent to Corigliano supply the best manna in all Calabria; the tree that produces it is the ash, which buds forth in small leaves, and is known by the name of *ornus*. It grows without any cultivation in the midst of forests, and its substance is collected by means of a horizontal incision made in the trunk of the tree. Manna used to constitute part of the revenues of the Crown, and was farmed out to a company that had the exclusive right of trading in it. This monopoly was a source of fresh vexation to the unfortunate peasants employed in collecting the article: as serfs of the soil, they were compelled to work without fee or reward, and the most barbarous system of surveillance was exercised over them. As

the brigands intercept all free communication through the greater part of the forests, the existing government can derive no advantage from this branch of commerce.

It is not without very great regret we witness the approach of that season in which a change is generally made in our cantonments. We shall, of course, be soon obliged to leave this delightful country; the mildness of the climate, the excellent quality of the provisions, particularly the wine, and a repose of three months, have completely restored the strength and spirits of the troops. In our progress through the country we lately occupied, the battalion lost two hundred and fifteen men, more than half of whom fell victims to the climate.

LETTER XXIV.

Conduct of Murat towards the French Army.—Austria declares War against France.—Military Events in Upper Italy.—Preparations of the English in Sicily.—Our Situation in Calabria.

Cosenza, April 26, 1809.

Our stay at Corigliano has happily been prolonged beyond our expectation. The battalion still remained in the same cantonments during the whole month of March, and came to Cosenza in the beginning of April, prepared for new events. Everything indicates an active campaign. All our troops are in motion; and a regiment, just arrived from Reggio, is proceeding by forced marches to upper Italy. I avail myself of this opportunity to make you acquainted with our political and military situation in Calabria. This letter

will be put into the post at Rome, in order to escape the interruption which is offered to our correspondence with France by Naples.

While we have been living at a distance from the busy world, and solely engaged in hunting wolves and wild boars, the most strange events have been passing around us. Murat, whose arrival in this kingdom the French hailed with so much delight, is very far from answering the expectations they had formed of him. In the hope of conciliating the affection of his new subjects, he shows himself anxious to anticipate all their demands, and lends a ready ear to all their denunciations against the French army. The less the Calabrians appear disposed to submit to his power, the more solicitous is he to gain them over, while listening to their atrocious calumnies and virulent invectives against our troops—those very troops

by whom alone this part of the kingdom has been held in obedience, under circumstances of the greatest possible difficulty and privation. If much abuse of authority has arisen from the military government established in these provinces, and if the conduct of particular individuals has been highly reprehensible, then let the guilty be severely punished. The whole army would be satisfied with this; but it is equally unjust and impolitic to make us all victims of the violent enmity of the inhabitants. Their rage against the French name knows no bounds, and the new King ought not to forget that he is the first Frenchman in the country. But instead of consulting his true interests, Murat listens only to the perfidious insinuations of some Neapolitan nobles, who find easy access to him, and impose upon his understanding, while flattering his self-love. He has suffered himself to be

persuaded that the nation, vain of having him for its sovereign, and ready to prove its devotion to his person, was exasperated only with the vexations caused by the French troops. Let him beware how he isolate himself in the midst of these perfidious Neapolitans; their fawning language too often conceals the foulest and the darkest designs.

In the mean time all those Frenchmen who held places in the administration of the provinces have been superseded by natives of the country. This measure, though just in itself, and consistent with the national interests, yet seems to have been dictated by no other spirit than that of encouraging the deadly hatred which the people bear towards us. A whole host of individuals, who ten years ago played some political part, or held military situations at the time the Parthenopean Republic was created, have ab-

jured at the foot of the throne those republican principles which had caused them to be proscribed from their country. Civil honours and high military rank have since been conferred upon them; they have been placed in full command throughout the provinces; and we, after having on many a field of battle earned our rank with toil and glory, now see ourselves subjected to the control of worthless adventurers, the greatest part of whom would never have sought place or promotion, except with the view of making a fortune. The consequence is, that the French officers, dissatisfied and discouraged, neglect the orders they receive from these incompetent persons, and all pursuit of the brigands has therefore almost entirely ceased, except so far as is necessary to protect our troops from their attacks. In this state of things the situation of the country grows every day worse

and worse, the more so, as the King, after having rendered the army discontented, seems desirous to disorganize it, by enrolling in his guard, and in the Neapolitan regiments which he is forming, all those subaltern officers and soldiers who, dazzled with the tinsel of the Neapolitan costume, criminally abandon our colours and uniform. The regiments quartered at Naples and in its environs have had already more than three thousand deserters from their ranks. The colonels having in vain made the most urgent remonstrances upon this point, have at last been obliged to address their complaints to the Minister of War at Paris. From that time an order has been given to open at the post-office at Naples all despatches which are put in for France; and it has become necessary to forward all communications by Rome, which is a devious route.

While the King thus imprudently resigns himself into the hands of treacherous advisers, a new war has broken out in Germany and in the north of Italy. The army of Prince Eugene, unexpectedly attacked on the very same day that Austria notified the declaration of war, has been obliged to retire behind the Adige. This momentary success has excited the greatest hopes among the discontented in this country, who already have circulated a report of the Austrians having entered Milan. They are all in the highest state of excitement, and we can plainly perceive, from a tone of arrogance so little characteristic of the Calabrians in ordinary times, that they believe the moment is now approaching when they can gratify their vengeful disposition against us, and that with the more ease, since the English are fitting out a grand armament in Sicily, directed evidently against this kingdom, and intended to co-operate with the efforts

of the new coalition which has just been formed.

The horizon which surrounds us is lowering, and fraught with storms, which, however, we are prepared to meet, although the army has been considerably weakened by the successive departure of several regiments for Upper Italy. Our division, reduced, at least, by four thousand men, will probably be the first to measure swords with the enemy. Separated from the larger body of the army, which is stationed in the vicinity of the capital, and isolated in a country equally difficult and dangerous, our position must be critical: the troops have therefore been concentrated at three principal points. In this emergency it behoves the King not to trust too implicitly to the Neapolitans at our expense, for they would soon break the idol if we were not strong enough to protect it.

LETTER XXV.

The English Fleet enters the Bay of Naples.—Uneasiness of Murat.—The French Troops ordered to approach the Capital.—The Fortress of Scylla besieged by the English.

Camp of Coronna, June 30, 1809.

The astonishing triumphs of the grand army, its entry into Vienna on the 13th of May, and the hasty retreat of the Austrians in evacuating those provinces of the kingdom of Italy which they had momentarily occupied, have procured for this country a degree of repose which was very far from being expected, and we wait at Cosenza the tardy approach of the English. The Court of Palermo seems destined to be the everlasting sport of these faithless allies, whose succours, always ill-timed, have constantly drawn it into false

positions, which have twice lost it the crown. The English, who maintained a considerable force both in Sicily and Malta, might have effected a great diversion, and even occasioned a general insurrection, if their fleet had put to sea the moment the Austrians marched so rapidly upon the Adige; but they deferred the hour of action until this power was crushed.

On the 14th of June, being at length apprised that their grand expedition had set sail, all our troops were immediately in motion, and the battalion proceeded to Nicastro. On the 17th, the General of Division was informed by a telegraphic despatch that it had entered the Bay of Naples, and he was ordered at the same time to evacuate Calabria. Never had so formidable an armament shown itself before this great city. The enemy's fleet, with eighteen thousand disposable troops

on board, six thousand of whom were Sicilians, consisted of upwards of two hundred ships. The King feeling uneasy for the capital, where, notwithstanding his great popularity, he might be surprised by a sudden revolt, hastened to rejoin the army. The first movement of the army commenced at Reggio; the camp of Coronna was broken up, and the fortress of Scylla provided with a sufficient garrison. On the 18th, the two battalions that were with us at Nicastro, were ordered to set out the following morning; and during the day, detachments of cavalry and artillery, together with bands of excisemen, were seen passing on in succession. On the same day, a Neapolitan General came down from the mountains, followed by a motley assemblage, consisting of three thousand individuals, armed with muskets, pistols, sabres, and poniards. They composed the volunteers of the

national guard, formed of pardoned brigands, with vagabonds and malefactors of every sort, whose hideous appearance seemed a frightful presage of their treacherous designs.

Our Commandant finding that in the general movement which was going forward, ours was the only battalion that had received no orders to march, had the foresight to perceive that it was reserved for some particular destination with this horde of bandits; and to assure himself of the fact, he had an interview with the Neapolitan General, the result of which confirmed all his fears.

This general officer, born in Calabria, where he possesses great property, has flattered himself with the hope of finding here a numerous body of partisans. Compromised in the eyes of the Court of Palermo, he is forced to attach himself to the cause of the new King; and has rashly

offered to defend Calabria, with the aid of those inhabitants who are devoted to the existing government. He states he can collect a large force, and only asks the support of one French battalion. I know not by what fatality it has happened that ours was destined for this service—a service so highly dangerous and so little honourable.

The Commandant, taking into consideration all the fearful chances to which we must be exposed, decided at once on setting out for Monteleone, and proposed that I should accompany him. We arrived there next morning before daylight. Every thing was already prepared for the march; Monteleone was to be entirely evacuated the same day. The General of Division, however, duly appreciated the strong dissuasive arguments that were addressed to him; we returned with him to Nicastro, where the

horrible conduct and frightful artifice of these men, who are appointed to defend Calabria, very soon convinced him that we should be doomed to utter destruction. He has consequently ordered us to follow the movement of the division, whose rear-guard the battalion will form during each day's march.

It was with an indescribable heaviness of heart we beheld our troops pass along. Encompassed by these perfidious auxiliaries, who commit all imaginable disorders, and fire upon us incessantly, we all had something to fear from private assassins. The battalion was therefore ordered to remain under arms, and it left the town before night-fall, for the purpose of taking up a position on the heights, while waiting the hour of departure fixed for next morning.

The Neapolitan General, seeing that disorder and confusion increased the

moment we had set out, so much so, that he felt alarmed for his personal safety, stole away for the purpose of joining us. He was ashamed of having committed an error which cost him his horses and equipage, carried off by his dear fellow-countrymen, who afterwards dispersed in all directions, leaving everywhere undoubted proofs of their evil designs.

Impatient to join the army, in order to take part in the actions which we presumed were going on before Naples, we set out on the 21st, at one o'clock in the morning, marching on the tops of the mountains to guard against ambuscades. Arrived on the heights which command Scigliano, we learned from the sound of a trumpet that this town was still occupied by our cavalry; and the moment we began to descend we met a detachment of mounted chasseurs, riding in advance of an

officer of the staff, who was the bearer of an order for the battalion to retrograde, and march in all haste to Monteleone. He informed us that the English, wishing to land on the coast of Baiæ, after having succeeded in their attempt upon Ischia, and Procida, were repulsed with loss; that the city of Naples was tranquil, and that the King, no longer feeling any uneasiness on this main point, had sent an order for the division to re-enter Calabria.

On our return to Nicastro we were received as liberators, so great was the terror which the appearance of the armed bands had spread among the inhabitants. They vied with each other in supplying us with refreshments; and after a halt of some hours, the battalion set out for Monteleone, where we arrived on the 22nd at daybreak, after having marched sixty miles in thirty-four hours under a burn-

ing sun. The colours of King Ferdinand floated on the steeples of the surrounding villages, and the English were laying siege to the fortress of Scylla. On the 24th, the head-quarters were again fixed at Monteleone, and on the same day the battalion proceeded to Mileto. The regiments which had commenced their retreat, and which for six successive days had to march more than thirty miles to form a junction with us, being now all collected together in the camp before Mileto, the division set out to attack the English. They fled precipitately on our approach, raising the siege of Scylla, abandoning all their battering-train, and leaving about one hundred prisoners in our hands. Arriving on the morning of the 28th on the Aspramonte, we saw their vessels crossing the Strait to return to Sicily. From this expedition, then, fitted

out at a great expense, the English have derived only the barren advantage of momentarily occupying two islands, the inhabitants of which they must be obliged to support.

LETTER XXVI.

The English Fleet enters the Ports of Sicily.—Results of the Expedition.—Camp of Coronna.—Anecdote.—Extraordinary Law-suit.

Camp of Coronna, July 31, 1809.

The campaign is, I believe, over for this year. Separated from the English by an arm of the sea, we imagine that hostilities have entirely ceased; and if the noise of cannon from the batteries on the coast was not occasionally heard, we might fancy we were passing the summer upon this mountain, for no other purpose than to enjoy a view which, to my mind, is far more sublimely beautiful than that of the Bay of Naples. We are wearied out with the monotony of our military exercises, which take place every morning at a quarter before six. Then it is that we

breathe upon these hills an invigorating and light air, wafted in refreshing breezes, which bring with them the aromatic odours of the numberless shrubs and plants that shed a rich perfume along the sea-coast. But when the sun is at its meridian, the camp becomes uninhabitable, and we seek repose under the shade of the huge chesnut-trees that surround us. People are really subdued to languor by the softness of this climate: it commands sleep, and they readily give way to that "dolce-far-niente," which has so many charms for the Neapolitans. It were well, however, if our repose were not troubled with the apprehension of one of those dread catastrophes to which this country is so liable. Monte Coronna is always strongly impregnated with volcanic matter; at each shock of an earthquake it sends forth huge fragments, which threaten to bury in ruins all the sur-

rounding habitations. The eruptions which took place on the side of Seminara, in the year 1783, gave rise to the most extraordinary law-suit that perhaps has ever existed. A considerable portion of land, planted with olives, was, without being separated, carried down to the foot of the mountain, where it threw into confusion the properties of two private individuals. The one claimed possession of the field, to which a resistless force had transported it; and the other insisted on his right to the ground beneath, as having always belonged to him. This cause, unique in its way, was tried before the tribunals at Naples, and a decision given in favour of the latter.

Perhaps one of these mornings, we shall awake safe and sound in the pretty little town of Palmi, the whole population of which is now employed in an extensive fishery, that covers the shore with small

craft and boats. Shoals of tunnies and sword-fish, insensibly drawn in by the currents of the Strait, are found through all parts of the sea in extraordinary abundance. The tunny-fish is caught at great expense, but it is held in the highest request. The salting and exportation of it form a very important branch of commerce. To catch this fish, nets are placed in the midst of the rocks, on a level with the water, having the bottom kept down with leads of considerable weight. When a sufficient quantity of fish gets within the meshes of the net, its expanse is gradually contracted, and then a general slaughter commences. Attacked on all sides with pikes, axes, and harpoons, the tunny splashes the water, red with its blood, and dashes itself with violence against the boats and the rocks. This barbarous mode of killing tunnies is one of the great amusements of the country,

and people are invited to the scene as to a fête.

The fish called the sword-fish, or emperor, and in the Italian "pesce-spada," is five or six feet in length. Its head is armed with a horny weapon of defence, in the form of a saw, the teeth of which are very sharp. It is with this weapon it attacks the whale, whose most formidable enemy it always proves to be. It is taken with the harpoon, struggling a long time, and frequently upsetting the boats.

The means employed in catching the sword-fish have lately occasioned a mistake, which happily was discovered in time to prevent serious consequences. The military guard established on the sea-coast arrested two men, who, by means of signals given from the top of a rock, were directing the movements of a great number of fishing-boats. The officer commanding the post, imagining

that these men had an understanding with the enemy, had them taken off to the camp, and, despite of their cries and protestations, they were on the point of being sent to head-quarters as spies; when the owners of the boats arrived very opportunely from Bagnara, to explain that the signals which were remarked, served to apprise the fishermen of the approach of the fish, and the direction in which they lay. It would still be very easy, under this pretence, to establish a correspondence with the enemy; but without a total prohibition of fishing, every precaution in this respect would be useless. Boats from Sicily and Calabria hold incessant communication with each other, and might alternately either serve or betray both sides. Moreover, what attempts might not the English make at this moment? They have just now evacuated the Isles of Ischia and

Procida, and after having demolished the fortifications, have sent part of their troops to Spain. Their last expedition against this kingdom seems to have had no other object than to inundate the country afresh with brigands, issuing forth from the caverns of Ætna. Nothing can be more dishonourable than such a system of warfare. The King has bitterly complained of it to the English Generals, who have thrown all the odium on the Court of Palermo, with which, it appears, they are not on good terms at this moment. Their movements seem to shew that, in contempt of those treaties which have opened to them the ports of Sicily, they intend adding this island to the number of their conquests.

LETTER XXVII.

Breaking up of the Camp.—Route during the Sirocco.—Arrival at Maida.—Brigands of the Forest of St. Euphemia.—Sicilian Bandits.

Maida, Sept. 2, 1809.

The most perfect tranquillity reigns on the shores of the Strait: some battalions have set out for the purpose of again scouring the caverns and forests of the Apennines.

On the 11th of August, at five in the morning, we received an order to proceed forthwith to Maida. It was seven o'clock before all the posts detached along the coast were called in. At eight we arrived at Palmi, whence there still remained a march of five hours to Nicotera. The heat was even at this hour quite suffocating; and a dull reddish vapour,

spread over the atmosphere, announced the approach of the *sirocco*. Next to earthquakes and brigands, this is one of the most dreadful plagues of the country. So long as the inhabitants are oppressed by its influence, every kind of labour is suspended, and they keep themselves shut up in their houses. Behold us, then, marching on this burning beach under a meridian sun, in the month of August, during the *sirocco*, and ankle deep in sand. To satisfy the cravings of a devouring thirst, we could find nothing but some drops of stagnant water collected in the parched bed of two rivers; this was really to journey through the deserts of Arabia the Rocky.

At ten o'clock, we could proceed no further; our sinews were relaxed, and we experienced such a prostration of strength, both physical and moral, as deprived us of all our faculties. You can form no

idea of this terrible wind. The atmosphere is a mass of flame; the air you breathe seems to issue from a furnace. Our soldiers, sinking under the effects of a burning thirst, dragged themselves painfully along; and when they arrived on the banks of the rivers, nothing could prevent them from swallowing with avidity copious draughts of the foul water which remained stagnant at the bottom. The more we advanced, the more our situation became intolerable. I dismounted for the purpose of lending my horse to a brother-officer who was not able to walk, and having marched for ten long hours, I could form a tolerably good idea of the sufferings of the soldiers, oppressed with the weight of their knapsacks and their arms. What would I not have given for a glass of iced water, the most certain specific for that faintness which is experienced during the prevalence of

the *sirocco!* About three in the afternoon, we arrived on the heights above Nicotera. We entered the town in a frightful state. The soldiers had their clothes covered all over with perspiration; and next day, great numbers of them being utterly unable to march, it was necessary to put into requisition every possible mode of conveyance which the country supplied. Upwards of two hundred and fifty men have remained in the hospital at Monteleone; and the 13th battalion has arrived at Maida, borne down by fatigue; for the *sirocco* has prevailed throughout the whole of this month. Maida is a large well-built town, commanding a valley through which flows the Amato. Situated almost equidistant from two seas, and in that part of Calabria which is least mountainous and narrow, it enjoys a free current of air that renders a sojourn here very pleasant at this overpowering season.

Our companies are dispersed through the villages which surround St. Euphemia, and some that are detached at the foot of the mountains, have daily affairs with the brigands. We are not over-anxious to pursue those in our immediate neighbourhood, for they never trouble us. However, we have availed ourselves of this favourable circumstance to make a somewhat curious expedition.

A few days ago the owner of the house where I lodge, came to inform me that the brigands of the forest of St. Euphemia had sent an emissary to treat for the ransom of several herds of cattle, which were carried off from some private individuals of the commune. He proposed that the Commandant should have this person arrested, and that he should be compelled to conduct us through the secret passages of the forest. This advice, given only with the view of getting back the cattle without paying any ran-

som for them, might still be turned to advantage. The individual was arrested that very night, and brought before the Commandant. The fear of a bullet, and the formal promise that he should have part of the booty, soon made him so tractable, that he engaged to stand to be shot with his hands tied behind his back, if, after the expedition was undertaken, he did not make it succeed. Such is the absence of all moral feeling among these depraved people, that the hope of gain is paramount over every other consideration. I myself directed the officers to proceed to the place appointed: the soldiers were awakened without any noise, and at eleven o'clock at night we left the precincts of Maida, making our way silently along the banks of the Amato. We crossed this river a short distance from the forest, which we entered, conducted by our guide, and

favoured by a fine clear moonlight. We had at first to open a way through a mass of thick brushwood, and then to cross a swamp, the mire of which emitted a most fetid stench.

Arrived at a deep ditch, the guide, guarded by some men, passed over to the other side for the purpose of seeking among the bushes for the beams and planks by means of which the brigands cross such places. This was a tedious operation. Daylight approached, and at a distance was heard the reiterated barking of a great number of dogs. Scarcely had some soldiers gained the opposite side of the ditch, and formed on a narrow bank, when musket shots, discharged from the forest, and followed by hideous yells, plainly told us that the brigands were aware of our approach. No time was to be lost. We rushed upon this bank headforemost: a new dyke arrested our pro-

gress, and ascertaining it was only four feet deep, we crossed it rapidly, while the first rays of the sun lighted us on our urgent march through a forest of very high trees. We soon arrived at a circular spot, surrounded with underwood, and protected from the heat of the sun by thick foliage. Here we at length found ourselves in the very centre of this den of bandits. The branches of the trees were covered with hammocks; horses, mules, and asses, were tied by the bridle to the trees; quarters of beef and mutton were in the process of being roasted round a huge fire; sacks of bread, cheese, and bacon lay upon the ground, together with several hogsheads of wine. In short, we found provisions of all kind, but the brigands had fled. We beheld, as the traces of their precipitate flight across the broken brambles, some hats which remained hung up there, and also fragments of

dress. On endeavouring to track the line through the morass, where these things were found, we were assured by the guide that he had never before been further in advance, and that he did not know the secret haunts of Benincasa, the chief of this horde: we were, therefore, obliged to content ourselves with the possession of his kitchen. We did due honour to the feast that was prepared there; but, perceiving that heads were getting hot, and the feet of many of the soldiers beginning to be unsteady, it was necessary to think of retiring. This was the more prudent, since the guide observed, that the brigands lurking all around, and protected by the impossibility of our penetrating into their fastnesses, might very easily let fly a shower of balls among us. Having loaded the mules and asses with the booty, we retired safe and sound from this mysterious labyrinth, covered, it is true, with mire and

mud, but still with the some slight glory of being the first to explore it.

It is wonderful how men can accustom themselves to live in such a place, without being consumed by pernicious fevers, and insects of every kind. The love of independence, or the fear of punishment, can alone effect this prodigy.

While we were making our way into this forest, a part of the detachment that ran along the skirts of it, found a great number of oxen and sheep, the produce of robberies committed in the neighbouring plains. Those that belonged to the commune of Maida, were restored to the owners, and the remaining animals being sold by auction, brought the detachment more than three hundred piasters. The guide has been liberally rewarded, and as we are well assured that he will never again venture to show his face in this community of bandits, we have given him his liberty.

On our return to Maida, a very strange spectacle presented itself to us. We found the whole population thrown into a state of anxiety and alarm, by the presence of certain individuals, armed with weapons of every kind, and exhibiting the character and appearance of a foreign costume. Their leader, wearing a sort of red uniform, with two epaulettes, advanced towards the Commandant, preceded by our officers. How was it that these strange faces, ill-omened and tawny-coloured, found themselves quietly in the midst of us, and under the protection of an officer of our corps? To solve this enigma, it will be sufficient to say, that the individuals we beheld were Sicilian bandits, whom the English landed on these coasts, after the last siege of Scylla. The Calabrian brigands, wishing to preserve a monopoly of plunder here, gave them a very bad reception. Harassed by our troops,

who killed a good many of them, they fought with timidity and distrust, in a country with which they were unacquainted; and have offered to surrender, on condition of being allowed to retain their arms, and furnished with means to return to their island. These unwelcome guests were, on the day they presented themselves, sent off to Monteleone, there to await orders from Naples respecting their fate.

Can the English deny their acts, now that this brigand leader, incensed at being abandoned by them, gives such details with regard to their plots and schemes, as must overwhelm them with confusion?

LETTER XXVIII.

CALABRIA INUNDATED WITH STRANGE BANDITS.—HAZARDOUS ENTERPRISE AT NIGHT.—ARRIVAL AT SAN-JOHAN-IN-FIORE.—SOJOURN IN THAT TOWN.

SAN-JOHAN-IN-FIORE, OCT. 26, 1809.

WE have just succeeded in routing one of the greatest assemblages of armed marauders that we have met with for a long time. On the 14th of this month, the battalion set out from Maida to place itself in echelons upon Nicastro and Cosenza. We were posted for some days at Scigliano, the centre of our cantonments; when the Commandant was apprised that a vast number of strange bandits had entered Calabria. It was probable that this sudden irruption might be under the direction of the English, and supported by a landing on their part; there-

fore it was highly important to crush at once these armed masses, and the troops were put in motion in all quarters. Two hundred men of the battalion being mustered with the utmost expedition, we set out on the morning of the 21st, taking the direction of the Syla, over which these brigands had spread themselves. On coming to a village within a short distance of Scigliano, we found it crowded with fugitives: the population of the surrounding neighbourhood, quite terrified, fled hither to escape from these unknown robbers, whose sudden descent might be compared to the progress of a swarm of locusts, consuming all the provisions that came in their way, and committing the most dreadful ravages. The terror they inspired caused their number to be immoderately exaggerated; they amounted, we were told, to ten thousand, the greater part on horseback. The people even as-

sured us that they saw their cannon carried along on the backs of mules. We appeared to the scared multitude as guardian angels: they blessed us, prostrated themselves at our feet, and with them nothing could equal the noble courage and generosity of the French. When the cries of alarm and expressions of gratitude, which danger rendered sincere, had ceased, we learned that during the night, the bandits having passed through the neighbouring villages, announced that they were only the advanced guard of a still more numerous column; a circumstance which necessarily heightened the consternation of the inhabitants.

Impatient to ascertain the precise number, direction, and plans of these new enemies, we set off immediately in pursuit of them. But as they had at least six hours in advance of us, the detachment was unable to come up with them. On the ap-

proach of night, hunger and fatigue obliged us to halt in a village, the inhabitants of which presented themselves to us with tears in their eyes. Having received intelligence that the brigands had established themselves in a village about six miles distant, we set out with guides, hoping to be able to attack them with success, while favoured by the darkness of the night, notwithstanding their great superiority of numbers. They lay concealed in a wood near the village, and the guides sent to discover them returned soon after, followed by the Syndic and the Captain of the Civic Guard, who gave us an exact account of their number and character. They were at least two thousand, one half of whom were mounted, for they carried off all the mares and young horses that were out at pasture on the Syla. Their leader, named Scarolla, gave an air of mysterious importance to their projects,

while dignifying himself with the title of "Chief of the Independents of the Basilicate." His dress was gorgeous, and he was followed by a great number of saddle-horses and mules, which they said carried considerable treasure. Here, then, at length, was a chief worthy to measure swords with, and, what was still more important, a rich booty to be seized. What a stimulus for our soldiers! Though they had already marched thirty miles, they demanded to set out again after having taken a little rest, and at four in the morning they were in full march, following the route which this horde had pursued. We could not miss the way, for numberless broken-down animals marked out the perilous paths which traverse these horrid mountains.

On reaching the summit of the elevated plain which commands the whole of this savage country, we met with the Captain of the Civic Guard, followed by some

armed peasants, who informed us that the brigands, being repulsed by one of our columns, endeavoured to escape from the Syla towards the plain of St. Euphemia: they were compelled, however, to take another direction, and were now in a deep valley, where they might be very easily surrounded. On receiving this intelligence, we set out without delay, conducted by the captain, and followed, unfortunately, by the peasants who accompanied him. At nightfall we gained the top of a mountain covered with wood; and from the space beyond it, a deep gorge, through which ran a violent torrent, we heard a confused noise, evidently indicating the presence of a large assemblage of men, who, it was clear, could be no other than the brigands. The circumstance was as favourable as could be desired for the purpose of taking them by surprise. Two columns, of fifty men

each, were immediately sent with the guides to fall upon them in the rear, in order to harass their retreat, while we were to attack them in front. Just at the moment the detachment was put in motion, some shots whizzed by me. I hastened my pace, and observed a group of the peasants who had accompanied us flying away at my approach. All at once a great uproar was heard among the bandits, who were now endeavouring with every possible exertion to secure their plunder and betake themselves to flight. Not an instant was to be lost. Our troops hurried rapidly down from the mountain, and precipitated themselves into the torrent. We soon found ourselves mingled pell-mell with them in that state of disorder and confusion which is inseparable from an attack in the night-time; and the glimmering light of the shots that were fired on all sides, enabled

us to see them running off at the top of their speed. The columns appointed to cut off their retreat not having arrived on the spot, and the darkness of the night preventing all pursuit, these brigands regained without further impediment, but not without considerable loss, the mountains of the Syla. The unfortunate warning of our approach given by these treacherous peasants, has thus caused us to lose the fruits of all our fatigues, and of the plans which we had made to ensure success. It is probable that the authors of this treason, fearing to be mixed up in the dangers of the night, wished to save themselves by giving notice that we were advancing, while at the same time they hoped by these means to get easy possession of the horses and booty which must be left behind. Next day, we found several brigands dead or dying, and the soldiers brought back a great

number of mules and asses, but which, unfortunately, conveyed no part of the treasures of Scarolla: they were charged, however, with his canteens, and to these we did ample justice.

Although the defeat of the chief of this band has not been complete, it has still disconcerted him in his projects; and we have succeeded in rendering a real service to the country. Presuming that he could have no other intention than to return to the quarter whence he came, and that it was likely he might be captured in his retreat, the Commandant is not without some hopes of meeting with him; and we have, therefore, taken the route of San-Johan-in-Fiore, finding everywhere, in the course of our march, the farms pillaged, the villages burned, and the inhabitants bewailing their losses.

We arrived here the night before last, harassed from fatigue, having marched

in four days upwards of a hundred miles, over ground of which you can form no idea. The brigands, having passed close to this place about eight hours ago, met with no interruption whatever, in consequence of the ill-devised plans that have been made. Fear, however, has supplied them with wings, and, flying from the country, they have once more sought their native mountains.

How are we to explain the motive of this singular incursion? The most probable is, that this bandit chief wished to escape to Sicily with the produce of his brigandage. The Commandant of the province entered this town yesterday, with a column of six hundred men. He is justly dissatisfied with the conduct evinced under such circumstances by the inhabitants of San-Johan-in-Fiore: they would have been quite sufficient of themselves to arrest the progress of these

strange hordes, who have twice traversed their territory without encountering the slightest obstacle. To punish this culpable neglect, he leaves our detachment here till a new order arrives, all the charges in the mean time to be defrayed by the people. This determination is as great a punishment to us as to them, for San-Johan-in-Fiore may be regarded as the Siberia of Calabria. The winter season sets-in in the most frightful manner in this elevated region, where thick fogs and perpetual snow will keep us in the most dreary confinement, separated from the whole world.

LETTER XXIX.

Description of San-Johan-in-Fiore.—Character of the Inhabitants.—Return to Cosenza.

Cosenza, Dec. 22, 1809.

The Commandant so effectually supported the power of the civil authorities of San-Johan-in-Fiore, already weary of a garrison, the maintenance of which was very burdensome, that at length an order was despatched, directing us to set out for Cosenza, where we arrived the day before yesterday, after a painful march of two days, in the midst of snow and piercing cold. I seem to have acquired a new existence on now finding myself amidst the bustle of a town, animated with industry, commerce, and all that intercourse which is created by the necessities of social life.

I doubt that there exists on the face of the earth a more dismal abode than that of San-Johan-in-Fiore during the winter season : it is an isolated town in the midst of the highest mountains of Calabria, the inhabitants of which still preserve all the original characteristic traits of the ancient Brutii : in fact, they are almost precisely such as the Greeks described the aborigines to have been when they formed their first establishments on the coasts of Brutium. Fed and clothed with the produce of their immense flocks, they form a community of herdsmen, ignorant and savage, whose rude conduct and abrupt manner have become proverbial throughout the whole of Calabria. It has never been possible under any government to correct the disposition which these mountaineers evince for wild independence, and still less to subject them to military service. Strong detachments

of troops have been quartered for a long time among them, and as they have been repeatedly disarmed, they have now become somewhat more tractable; still, however, they cannot bring themselves to look upon the French without expressing their bitter hatred and discontent.

A few days after our arrival, some malevolent persons circulated a report that we were going to levy the military conscription, which was then beginning to be organized in this kingdom. The consequence was, that some soldiers who were stationed in an isolated spot, were insulted, and armed bands were seen running through the streets. These hostile demonstrations called for every possible precaution on our part, and accordingly the whole detachment being assembled in a monastery of Capuchin Friars, situated upon an eminence, the Commandant having summoned together

the authorities and principal inhabitants, commenced by disabusing them as to the object of our arrival; declaring at the same time, that he would hold their heads responsible for any disorders that might occur, and that from that moment he considered them as hostages. The Syndic, a personage essential to the service, in ensuring our supply of provisions, was alone released. By means of his expostulations, and the formal assurance he gave that no conscription whatever was intended, their turbulent minds were calmed. Tranquillity being thus completely re-established, the hostages were set at liberty; however, we always lived in a state of distrust, and never quitted our dismal monastery except for the purpose of following the tracks of the roebucks and wolves which traverse these icy regions in great numbers. We beheld nothing but the gloomy pine-tree,

whose branches waving in the storms which detached pieces of ice from them, presented in vivid contrast a deep green rising upon the surface of glittering snow.

Judge, then, if Cosenza ought not to appear agreeable to us. Notwithstanding its rains and tempests, we have here at least the society of other civilized beings, and can learn something of what is passing in the world. I was curious to ascertain what had become of the band of marauders which we had pursued to San-Johan-in-Fiore, and was told, that after having re-entered the States of the Church without any molestation, they established themselves on the steep heights of Monte Polino, to rest there after their fatigues, when, chance directing from this quarter a moveable column of the 10th regiment of the line, they were surprised in the midst of their profound sleep, and great numbers of them slain. The remainder

were routed on all sides, and the soldiers obtained so considerable a booty, that they were seen playing at *petits-palets* with Spanish double pistoles. Scarolla, wounded in this affair, took refuge with some shepherds, who delivered him up to justice for a sum of a thousand ducats; and he has just been hanged upon the spot which was the principal scene of his depredations. Would that all those lawless chiefs who devastate Calabria may meet with a like fate, so that we could leave a country in which our fatigues, privations, and hard services will for ever remain unrewarded!

LETTER XXX.

THE AUTHOR, WHILE SETTING OUT FOR NAPLES, IS OBLIGED TO RETURN TO CALABRIA.—INCIDENTS DURING THE MARCH.

COSENZA, FEB. 5, 1810.

A HAPPY circumstance caused me to set out for the moment from Calabria; I was on my way to Naples, and hoped to spend some fifteen days there, entirely master of my own time. Already my imagination carried me to the summit of Vesuvius; it disported through the plains of Baiæ, which were once so enchanting, and also upon the borders of the lake of Agnano, (those of the lake of Avernus): I interrogated the Cumæan Sibyl; in short, I made certain of visiting the environs of Naples, so full of classical recollections, and with which I had hitherto been ac-

quainted only by the accounts of travellers. A fatal countermand has changed everything, and all my brilliant prospects have ended in a sad and painful march.

A great number of our troops being rendered unfit for service by the insalubrity of the climate, and the casualties of this harassing sort of war, the General-in-Chief ordered that they should be sent to Naples. The officer who was to command this detachment, having been taken ill the day before its departure, I was unexpectedly appointed to succeed him; and on the 21st of January I set out with seventy-four invalids, the greater part of whom, being unable to march, were mounted on asses. The ass is to Calabria what the wild goat is to the desert: cautious, tractable, and singularly adroit in getting over dangerous passes, he quietly bears the impetuousness of the French soldier,

who with the one hand gives him a morsel of bread, and with the other pricks his lazy flanks with the point of the bayonet.

My caravan was put in motion at nine in the morning; to preserve my poor invalids from the torrents and the mire of the Chratis, in which the battalion had nearly been buried on its entry into Calabria, I took the mountain route. We found on the first day very excellent quarters at Montalto, a large, populous, and wealthy town. Next day, after having marched some miles, our progress was so much impeded from the effects of the rain which had fallen during the night, that we were obliged to descend into that horrid gorge which we anxiously wished to avoid. Our guides, mounted on mules, led the way, and we had happily extricated ourselves from all those dangers which we had to encounter at every step, when, on arriving within a few miles of Tarzia, a

torrent, the only remaining one we had to cross, completely arrested our march. After having made several vain attempts to discover a ford, we had now only to think of finding some spot where we might spend the night, which was fast approaching. I therefore ordered the detachment to retire, for the purpose of seeking an asylum at a farm lying at some distance in the rear, and from which we were separated by a torrent. When we reached the banks of this deep and rapid stream, the guides told us that it would be dangerous to cross it in the dark. I had consequently no other alternative than to station the detachment in an open field; it rained incessantly, and it was impossible to light some green wood, the only combustible material we had at hand. Thus placed in the midst of torrents, anxious about the means of passing them, perishing with cold, and deprived

of food, we spent a long and horrible night—a night of real suffering to our poor soldiers, most of whom laboured under obstinate fevers, and the effects of badly-healed wounds. We clubbed together to dispense a wretched morsel of bread to each individual, and impatiently looked out for the morning, which seemed to withhold its light from our eyes.

The moment the day dawned, I determined to make for the mountains whence the torrents descended. My object was to surmount, it possible, the last obstacle that separated us from Tarzia. We marched across some fields, ankle deep in mud, and reached a pass leading to a village situated on the declivity of the mountains, when we heard the tocsin sounded, and beheld several armed men approaching towards us. I was singly in advance, to remove any impression of distrust, and was recognised by a man

who rushed by me dressed in the French uniform. He was a chasseur of the 4th regiment, whom an accident had detained for several days in this village, inhabited by Albanians ; a brave people, always on their guard against brigands, and who, seeing the detachment arrive by a route very little frequented by the French, took us for bandits. On discovering their mistake, they received us with the most cordial hospitality, and furnished us with guides to direct our progress across the mountains to Tarzia.

Our march to Lagonegro was not attended with any casualty. Campotomese, which is so formidable at this season of the year, presented no other impediment than that the torrent, which rushes forth at the foot of it, obliged us to make a round of some distance, in order to effect an easy passage. We found no ambuscade on ascending the Gualdo, where, on

our first arrival, the battalion had nearly witnessed a horrible assassination; and, in short, all the dangers of this distressing march being surmounted, we reached Lagonegro on the 25th. From this point the mountains fall considerably, stone bridges are constructed over the rivers, and there is a fine road to Naples. Although I was still but half-way towards that city, yet I fancied myself in the midst of its environs. Never was any disappointment so mortifying as mine, when, sitting down to dinner with the Commandant of the place, I received from him a despatch, ordering the officer commanding the detachment which was on its way from Cosenza, to return with a column of conscripts destined for Calabria, and which was to arrive the following day, under the command of an officer attached to the garrison of Naples, to whom I was to give charge of the

invalids. The order being positive, nothing remained for me but to obey it; and with a heavy heart I retraced my steps into the midst of this horrible Calabria, having charge of some hundred recruits and upwards, being part of a contingent of three hundred men that left France two months ago. The anxious care of conducting these young persons through dangers in which they were totally inexperienced, recalled me somewhat from my sad reveries, and, on the 23d of January, I re-entered Cosenza.

LETTER XXXI.

Excursion in the Eastern Part of the Farther Calabria.—Description of that Coast.—The Towns of Squillace and Gerace.—Site and Ruins of the Ancient Locri.—Notice respecting the Calabrian Gipsies.—Return to Cosenza by Reggio and Monteleone.

Cosenza, April 3, 1810.

Ever since the luckless countermand which prevented me from going to Naples, I experienced the deepest dejection. The amusements which the town of Cosenza affords became insipid to the last degree; I longed for some change of scene; and, therefore, readily joined with an intelligent Captain and a Lieutenant of the navy, who were appointed to explore the eastern coasts of the farther Calabria, from the Gulf of Squillace to Cape Spartivento. These two officers arrived at Cosenza from

Naples on the 28th of February, and dined with the Commander of our battalion, who had then the temporary government of the province. In consequence of the orders they had received from head-quarters, they were to take with them from Cosenza an escort of forty men. I offered to take the command of this detachment, and we set out on the 3rd of March, passing through Scigliano, Nicastro, and Maida; whence we arrived on the 6th at Squillace, a wretched, ill-built town, which can be reached only by climbing up the steep ascent of a mountain. One is recompensed for the fatigue of this exertion by a magnificent view, embracing a vast expanse of sea, together with a beautiful, well-cultivated country, watered with a mountain-river, which forms magnificent cascades. The mission of my companions had for its object to ascertain whether there existed in this quarter, so little frequented

by our troops, any channel capable of receiving light frigates. For this purpose, it took us two days to explore the whole coast. Though the Gulf is of considerable depth, still it presents only a roadstead, which is exposed to all winds. We found, in our progress, some superb ruins, which were doubtless those of the ancient *Syllacium;* a colony founded by the Athenians. Antiquaries have put forth learned dissertations to determine whether this ancient city occupied the site of the present Squillace, or stood upon the sea-coast. The ruins of which I have spoken would seem to render the latter hypothesis the more probable.

We took our departure on the 9th for Gerace, and were engaged during six days in exploring the natural creeks made by the rocks, and in sounding sandy bottoms of no great depth. On quitting the fine plains of Squillace, we traversed some

dreary mountains, the savage inhabitants of which, taking us for pirates, fled at our approach, and barricaded themselves in their houses. It was in this manner we were received at Stallati, Guasparina, Suvrato, Monasteracce, Castlevettre, La Rochella, and some other wretched villages perched upon the points of rocks. The plains, devastated by numberless torrents, which leave behind them sad traces of the ravages they cause in winter, present a dismal appearance, and are cultivated with very little care.

Gerace is the most considerable town on this coast; its situation very much resembles that of Squillace: it takes two long hours of painful climbing to reach some fine houses, surrounded with narrow streets, that are obstructed with heaps of dung, and filled with wretched beings, whose long funereal mantles conceal the squalid rags that attest their misery. We were

received here in some sort of state, and soon encompassed with an idle and inquisitive crowd, who plagued us with their interminable gabble respecting the site of the ancient Locri. The inhabitants of Gerace stoutly pretend that their mountain was the spot where it stood,—an assertion, the falsehood of which is rendered obvious by the fine ruins we beheld in the plain. We visited them next day, after having remained for a long time examining the principal church of the town, which is decorated with a number of splendid columns, taken from the ruins of Locri. The elegance of their forms, and the exquisiteness of their finish, were sufficient to attest the luxury and magnificence of this city, which held the first rank in the history of *Magna Græcia*. A colony coming from Locris, in Greece, founded the republic of Locri, in Italy. Its system of polity was regarded as a

master-piece of government, however it might be now condemned, as at variance with the progressive improvement of political science and legislation. To ensure the permanent stability of the laws, and prevent all innovation, it was enacted, that, whoever should propose any changes, should present himself before the general assembly of the people with a rope round his neck, and be hanged on the spot, if the proposition were rejected. The Locrians, after having vanquished the Crotonians, were, in their turn, subjugated by Hannibal. They had previously given a hospitable asylum to the tyrant Dionysius, upon his expulsion from Syracuse; but instead of evincing gratitude for such great kindness, he made himself detested by his crimes and excesses. The ruins which are found dispersed in various quarters around, clearly prove that this city was

of considerable extent. We observed some very lofty walls, temples with their arches still perfect, and stately columns with dilapidated capitals, which display admirable execution. We met with an aqueduct cut through a rock, eight feet broad and six in height. At the moment I wished to explore it, I perceived by a dim glimmering light, several suspicious-looking persons squatted in a line together, and being accompanied only by one individual of our detachment, I hastily retraced my steps, not choosing to risk an adventure under such circumstances. Returning, however, with a strong force, I ejected the whole party, and twenty individuals of both sexes marched out before me. They proved to be a band of Bohemians, or gipsies. I had often before heard of these vagrants, but never met with any of them in this distant and insaluted part of Italy. Flying before our

moveable columns, they have always endeavoured to seek refuge in cantons rarely visited by our troops, carrying on some sort of traffic with the inhabitants, on whose credulity they never fail to impose. The following is the result of my inquiries respecting them.

The gipsies of Calabria, like all those who traverse the other parts of Europe, are composed of wandering bands, possessing neither lands nor fixed property of any kind, and never allying themselves with any class of citizens. Their origin is as much a mystery as their religious rites, which they always like to celebrate in gloomy caves, or in the depths of forests. They speak the language of the country with a foreign accent, and their own peculiar tongue appears to be evidently derived from the East. Their ostensible pursuit is to work at old iron of every description, but they more fre-

quently live by their wits, telling fortunes, making juggling excursions to fairs and markets, and bartering horses and asses, which are generally stolen. Their raiment is miserable, their indecency excessive; my unexpected appearance suddenly interrupted them at a moment when they were celebrating a marriage. An old sorceress presented to me the young bride, who, taking me by the hand, offered to tell my fortune; I gave her a piaster as a compensation for whatever uneasiness my unwelcome presence had caused. She was a very young girl, and despite of the deep swarthy hue of her complexion, would have appeared to great advantage in any other attire than that in which she was arrayed. She had dark, animated eyes, beautiful teeth, a sweet expression of countenance, and in person was tall, and delicately formed.

We set out on the 18th from Gerace,

furnished with an abundant supply of excellent white wine, which is justly accounted the best in the kingdom. We halted for the night at Bianco, the most wretched of all the wretched villages I have ever beheld. Here our presence caused an equal sensation of alarm, as in the places I have already mentioned; the whole population fled from us, raising wild cries of terror. The poor Syndic, finding it impossible to procure for the detachment a sufficient quantity of bread, supplied us with fresh fish in abundance. To reach this village it was necessary to march over a sandy beach, the heat of which was intolerable; and then we had to climb up an immense mass of rock that did not present one particle of vegetation. I gave permission to the soldiers to go and bathe in the sea, but fortunately they were dissuaded from availing themselves of it by the caution

they received from the Syndic, who told them that the whole coast was infested with sharks. He pointed out to me a young man whose arm had been amputated in consequence of a bite from one of these monsters of the deep.

A storm which arose while we were on our march next day, obliged us to pass the night at Branca-Leone; a dismal village, the stone-work of which was cemented with dirt. For our repast we were obliged to content ourselves with goat soup; but copious libations of the excellent wine of Gerace, consoled us in some degree for the loss of a dinner.

On the 21st we descended to the seashore in order to explore the creeks and sinuosities of Cape Spartivento, where Italy verges to its extreme point in mountains composed of whitish earth. The weather being tempestuous, and the sea very rough, we were obliged to make for

the heights, and after a most painful march, under incessant rain, we came to Pentedatolo, a beautiful village, where all the branches of the Apennines terminate, and which leads the way into that delightful valley of Reggio, called *The Land of Promise.* It is from this spot you discover, in all its grandeur, the magnificent amphitheatrical expanse formed by Calabria and Sicily. The charms of this vast and sublime view it would be quite impossible to describe. The more you approach Reggio, the more your progress becomes enchanting. The route follows the course of a river skirted with poplars, which are interlaced with vines that seem prepared by nature as a triumph for Bacchus. You afterwards pass under arbours of orange and lemon trees, which lead directly to the town. We remained there two days. My companions stopped at Monteleone, whence I arrived at Cosenza

on the 31st of March. It seems that I am soon to recommence a part of this excursion; for I have learned, since my arrival here, that a descent upon Sicily is very seriously contemplated. This explains, clearly enough, the object of the round we have taken. All the dock-yards of the capital are in full activity preparing to launch gun-boats. Two regiments, just arrived from upper Italy, have reinforced our weak army, which is to make a general muster in Calabria. The King has gone to Paris to attend the marriage of Napoleon, but is expected to return by the end of the month. It is probable that about that time a general movement will be made.

LETTER XXXII.

Entry of Murat into Cosenza.—Project of a Descent upon Sicily.—Dispositions for Attack and Defence on both sides of the Strait.—Arrival of the King at Scylla.—The English bombard that Town.

Camp of Meglia, June 6, 1810.

A glorious career now opens before us: noble toils are to succeed our irksome movements in pursuing brigands from one place to another. Behold us, then, preparing to meet the English, and about to engage in a most venturous, but, at the same time, most brilliant expedition.

The King returned to Naples on the 27th of April, and since then gun-boats, and transports laden with provisions and munitions of war, have sailed for the Strait. Finally, having set out from

his capital on the 16th of May, he made his triumphal entry into Cosenza on the 19th, at four in the afternoon. The whole population of the town and environs rushed out to meet him. A large body of troops lined the way through which he was to pass, and he presented himself attired in an extremely rich costume, a good deal resembling that of a herald-at-arms. He was mounted on a fine spirited charger, which he managed very gracefully, and was followed by a numerous and brilliant staff. The whole display was certainly very grand and imposing. The King never for a moment lost sight of any thing that could serve to enhance him in the estimation of his new subjects. On the same day, he received all the civil authorities, and they all appeared charmed with his dignified air, affable deportment, and graceful condescension. The following day all the

officers of the army were presented to him. He received us with an air of great good-humour, and stated, in direct terms, that he was leading us to the conquest of Sicily. On the 21st there was a grand review, at which the royal guards, both horse and foot, were decked out in superb uniforms, glittering with gold and silver lace; while our soldiers, in simple but strict attire, were conspicuous for nothing except the bright polish of their arms and their steady, martial attitude.

Some few days after this review, the battalion left Cosenza to proceed to the camp of Meglia, a mountain lying above Scylla, whence it commands the entrance of the Strait. The opposite shore presents at this moment a very animated spectacle. The English are fortifying all their positions. We can discern with our glasses a great number of Sicilian peasants working at an entrenched camp,

which is to hold communication with Messina, by means of a line of redoubts. Several of the enemy's large vessels, frigates, sloops, and gun-boats, are cruising in the channel, night and day. On our side, we are getting our boats in readiness with the utmost possible despatch, and raising redoubts along the beach, chiefly between Bagnara and Scylla, where the sea forms a favourable anchorage for the flotilla, which is just about to be assembled.

Our army, consisting of twenty-four thousand men, five thousand of whom are Neapolitans, extends from the camp of Meglia to the environs of Reggio. That of the English, commanded by General Stuart, is sixteen thousand men, six thousand of whom are Sicilians, who occupy all the heights immediately opposite to us.

The King, after having remained for some days at Cosenza and Monteleone,

arrived on the 2nd of this month at Palmi, where he embarked on the 3rd for Scylla. He entered that place amidst the ringing of bells and the thunder of the English artillery; for the enemy celebrated his arrival by throwing bombs into the town. The cannon of the fortress, the batteries, and gunboats briskly returned the fire, which was kept up very sharply for some time, but with more noise than damage.

The presence of the King will doubtless hasten all our preparations for the descent. If the English possess formidable means of defence, still the anticipation of reducing so rich and important a place as Sicily excites our courage to overcome all difficulties. However, as it would be the height of rashness, and even of extravagant folly, for us to attempt, with our frail and light craft, to face those floating citadels, the slightest movement of which would

annihilate us, it is generally thought that the passage must be risked by taking advantage of such a change of wind as may oblige the English vessels to take refuge in the port of Messina, and carry us in a body to the shores of Sicily. The army once safely landed there, the whole island must very soon submit.

LETTER XXXIII.

Situation of the French and English Armies.—Combat between the two Flotillas.

Camp of Meglia, July 22, 1810.

Nothing favourable to the execution of our enterprise has yet presented itself. We are now upon the very theatre of celebrated fiction; and it would seem as if the English, masters of the Æolian Isles, held those winds captive which could waft us to the opposite coast. These untoward delays are the more vexatious and thwarting to our impatience for action, since all the preparations for landing have long since been made. While waiting the arrival of that moment, I shall proceed to give you some idea of our present situation, and of the

events which are daily passing before our eyes.

The King has established his head-quarters near Reggio, on the heights of Biale. He occupies a splendid pavilion in a wood, which is immediately opposite the noble mansion where General Stuart resides in the neighbourhood of Messina. The two Generals-in-Chief, with a gallantry which is altogether of the true military style, frequently interchange the projectiles which sometimes fall in the midst of their respective camps. Our army is formed into three divisions, the first two, French, commanded by Generals Parthouneaux and Lamarque; the third, Neapolitans, under the direction of General Cavagnac, and occupying the environs of Reggio. The General of Division, Count Grenier, one of the most distinguished officers of the French army, is at the head of the Staff. The flotilla, composed

of upwards of a hundred sloops of war, and a great number of gun-boats of every size, being ranged in a line to receive the men, horses, and artillery, is anchored under cover of the batteries of the coast, and close to the detachments that are appointed to make all the necessary arrangements for our landing.

On the 30th of June, at nine o'clock at night, the army was ordered to repair to the place of embarkation without the least noise. At eleven all the troops were on board, together with the King and his Staff; we observed the most profound silence, attending only to the signal which was to be given; when, at two o'clock in the morning, we were suddenly ordered to disembark. We returned to the camp, regarding this as the first general rehearsal of the great scene which was soon to be acted. While we were embarking, the detachment left to guard

the camp saw fires lighted on the tops of the mountains around us. This was unquestionably a signal given to the English, from whom it is extremely difficult to conceal our movements.

The King has twice passed the army in review; the last time was on the 7th of this month, near a place called Villa-San-Giovanni, where we stood exposed to the fire of two corvettes, three brigs, and a great number of sloops of war. The balls passed over our heads, but without in the least disturbing the precision and steadiness of our movements. In the mean time the artillery of the guard having advanced, obliged the enemy to retire from within the range of our guns.

The two flotillas frequently engage in sharp encounters. The English advance, either for the purpose of attacking the convoys that arrive by sea, or of destroy-

ing our plans of embarkation; our whole line then hastens forward to engage them, and the result is a discharge of cannon from both sides, which continues for whole days together. The Neapolitan marines, supported by detachments of the French grenadiers in gunboats, and encouraged by the presence and approbation of the King, evince great intrepidity. On the 9th of June, they fought with bravery and success, to protect the entry of a convoy coming from Naples. On the 10th, the whole of the enemy's flotilla, supported by brigs and corvettes, resumed the conflict, and was forced to retire, after having lost a gun-boat, which was boarded by the grenadiers of the 10th regiment of the line. On the 22nd there was a general engagement, which was still more to our advantage. Two gunboats and two schooners were sunk, and the gunboat in command taken by boarding. A more

serious affair than even this took place on the 29th: the struggle was long, murderous, and of doubtful success. Both sides have had several small vessels towed away. In short, not a day passes that some engagement, more or less obstinate, does not take place; but which can, in no respect, hasten the execution of our projects. We must, as a matter of necessity, as I have told you, wait for a change of wind, which, by forcing the English to put back, may leave the channel open to us. This necessity is the more urgent, since the sailors, who are to convey us over, being composed of miserable wretches pressed from all the coasts of this kingdom, tremble at the very sound of a cannon, and employ every expedient they can devise to escape from danger. For the last two hours every thing has seemed to promise a favourable wind, and while waiting the good pleasure of Æolus to grant

it to us, our army, and that of the enemy, are spectators of these naval skirmishes. They cover the heights that rise above both sides of the Strait, and a finer military spectacle cannot possibly be witnessed. The channel, covered with gunboats that send bombs, howitzers, and bullets, from one shore to the other,—and the English vessels displayed in all their stately grandeur along the coasts of Sicily —give to this theatre of war an air of the most imposing magnificence.

LETTER XXXIV.

GRAND REVIEW.—BRILLIANT FÊTE.—PRESENT SITUATION OF CALABRIA.—DEPARTURE FOR CASTROVILLARI.

CASTROVILLARI, AUGUST 31, 1810.

THE sad advantage of having gained some celebrity in this partisan warfare in which the battalion has been so long engaged in Calabria, has had the effect of detaching us once more to the mountains, for the purpose of keeping open the communications with the capital, which are now very often intercepted by the brigands.

On the 15th of August, the whole army being assembled opposite to Messina, was reviewed in grand array; after which followed salvos of artillery and musketry. The flotilla was fenced and ranged in

order of battle, in the presence of all the English naval force that had advanced to observe our movements. Never before did the Strait exhibit so splendid a display. The English must have been delighted, for they never once attempted to interrupt our mirthful enjoyment. After the review, the troops returned to the camp, where they spent the remainder of the day in sports of every kind. In the evening, the officers of the Guard gave a grand banquet. At nine o'clock, there were magnificent fireworks, followed by a very brilliant ball, at which a great number of ladies from Reggio, and the neighbourhood, attended. A sky without the semblance of a cloud, and an atmosphere serene as stillness itself, threw an inexpressible charm over this ball, which was given in the open air. You can form no idea of the delightful nature of the nights in this

southern region. The Strait, vividly reflecting the blaze of light which shone from the numerous bonfires in front of our camp, and also from the illuminations of the towns and villages lying on our side of the shore, produced upon the senses an effect absolutely magical.

On the morning of the 16th, the charm ceased, so far as we were concerned, for we were ordered to proceed immediately to Castrovillari. While the army has been mustered in all its strength at the extremity of Calabria, the interior of the provinces, entrusted to the protection of the militia of the towns (a force very little regarded by the brigands), has again been a prey to the greatest disorders; and the King has, therefore, determined on sending off some battalions from the camp.

We entered Nicastro on the 20th, and, instead of following the ordinary route, marched along the beach, to protect,

in case of necessity, the convoys arriving by sea, and which are daily attacked by the English. The military stations assigned to us are Castiglione, Amantea, Paula, Cetraro, Belvedere, and Lungro. The little town of Amantea, backed by a steep rock, and commanded by an old castle, which sustained an obstinate siege in the year 1806, is almost deserted at this season. Such of the inhabitants as are in anything like easy circumstances, abandon a rock which is continually exposed to the heat of a burning sun, that engenders putrid and malignant fevers. The few wretched beings we found remaining were like so many ghastly spectres wandering round forsaken abodes.

Far different is it with Paula, a fine, populous town, pleasantly situated on a hill which enjoys a pure and salubrious air. The surrounding mountains, covered with noble forests and splendid country-

seats, are beautiful and picturesque in the highest degree. This town has given birth to St. Francis, (of Paula, as he is called,) founder of the order of monks that bears his name, and held in great veneration all over Christendom. The Calabrians repose the most unbounded confidence in his mediation, and nothing can be more extravagant than their mode of invoking it. You see them falling prostrate at the foot of his image, after having coiled round the head of the saint a sort of halter, the end of which they hold while uttering the most fervent prayers. This saint, who rigidly interdicts his votaries from the use of flesh meat, and who does not permit even the sick to touch it except with very great reserve, was desirous of providing some pigeons for the invalids of the convent of Paula. But these pious individuals, through excess of austerity, refusing to partake of them, pigeons from that period

have been regarded as sacred. They have multiplied to such a degree that all the walls of the monastery are covered with them; the inhabitants of the country would be shocked and scandalized at the idea of disturbing them, notwithstanding the great damage they do to the crops. The universal persuasion is, that were any person so wicked as to attempt to fire at them, the gun would burst, and inevitably kill the sacrilegious sportsman. Hence the Syndic enjoined upon us the solemn obligation of respecting these objects of their superstitious devotion, lest otherwise we might excite a revolt.

At Belvedere we quitted the sea-shore, after having detached a company to occupy the battery of Cirella, situated on a coast some miles distant. We traversed some very high mountains covered with thick forests, and intersected with deep valleys. This part of Calabria is a vast, lonely region, abandoned to birds of prey, to wolves,

and wild boars. The paths which traverse it are covered over with a shade that has never yet been penetrated by the rays of the sun.

After having marched twenty-five miles through this extraordinarily picturesque country, we came to the village of Lungro, near which there is a mountain containing salt-mines. They are worked without skill or activity, though they might be rendered of the greatest service to all Calabria, and are capable of producing a considerable revenue to the Government.

Next day we continued to descend for four long hours through frightful passes; at last, after a march of eleven days, we arrived on the 27th at Castrovillari, overwhelmed with fatigue and the consuming heat of a sun which never ceases to glow with the fiercest power over the unhealthy tracts we had to traverse.

LETTER XXXV.

INSURRECTION OF THE ARRONDISSEMENT OF CASTROVILLARI.—EXPEDITION AGAINST THE INSURGENTS.—CHECK EXPERIENCED AT ORSOMARZO.—VARIOUS EVENTS.

CASTROVILLARI, SEPT. 28, 1810.

THAT part of the arrondissement of Castrovillari lying at the entrance of Calabria, was in full insurrection when we arrived. The inhabitants of the villages bordering on Campotomese intercepted the communications with the capital; and the money sent forward to the camp, under weak escorts, was in constant danger of being carried off. The chief officer of our battalion being appointed to the command of the arrondissement, was ordered to occupy the defiles of Campotomese with entrenched posts, and employ all the means in his

power to put down the insurgent population. This service presented the greatest difficulties, in consequence of the nature of our positions, and the character of the savage inhabitants, ferocious and ignorant to excess. Moreover, we were not at all acquainted with this part of Calabria, and the battalion, considerably reduced by diseases and the detachments already furnished, had not more than three hundred and fifty disposable men.

After resting some days, we marched out for Mormano, which, from the prosperous condition of the inhabitants, had not yet openly dared to throw off the mask. We entered it without encountering any difficulty; but at night, three soldiers having imprudently gone out from a church, where they were quartered, fell under the poniards of some wretches, and this was quite sufficient to convince us of the bad dispositions of the inhabitants

towards our countrymen. The Commandant had the Syndic immediately arrested, together with his four assistants, and two of the principal proprietors, who neither would nor could deliver up the perpetrators of the murder. We were obliged to keep them as hostages, in order that they should answer for the peaceable conduct of their fellow-citizens, and furnish, on their personal responsibility, trustworthy guides to scour all parts of the country. After having left behind a detachment, which secured itself in a convent, for the purpose of guarding the hostages, and of assisting us in the event of our being obliged to fall back upon a point of retreat, we set out on our expedition to scour the insurgent villages. We traversed some frightful mountains and yawning gorges. At every step we took, we had to be on our guard against ambuscades—a caution that retarded our

march considerably, being in every instance obliged to assure ourselves of the way. We found the miserable villages through which we passed inhabited only by women, sick people, and old men. All the population fled at our approach. But at what point was it preparing to reassemble? It was most important to ascertain this, in order to secure ourselves against a sudden attack. The detachments sent forward to make the discovery with the view of capturing the first band of peasants that might come in their way, carried off as guides two ferocious-looking beings employed in tending flocks,—real savages, whose jargon it was almost impossible to comprehend. After much difficulty, and a pretended threat of shooting them if they refused to speak, we learned from them that an assemblage of several thousand men waited our approach in a defile, through which we must neces-

sarily pass, while continuing our progress. We instantly hastened our pace towards the spot, hoping to take them by surprise. To ensure this result, we found it necessary to make a great detour, and proceed through woods that were almost impervious. At length we arrived, unobserved, at a position which commanded that of the insurgents. We approached it with extreme caution, and suddenly rushing out from a very dark and thick wood, beheld a multitude of peasants lying down upon the ground, without any order or regard to defence, most of them being asleep. Abruptly roused by the volley we discharged at them, they took to flight with all the speed they could make, leaving behind them several dead and wounded. We pursued them, at the point of the bayonet, to a precipice, at the extremity of which stands the village of Orsomarzo. It would be extremely

difficult to meet with any situation more sublimely terrific and extraordinary than the spot where this village lies engulfed. Surrounded on all sides by gigantic mountains, terminating in conical points, it seems, at it were, placed at the bottom of a vast well. The descent is by a steep flight of steps, following the windings of a torrent, which rushes down with a loud roaring, and forms grand cascades. This torrent passes through the village, whence, finding vent through the narrow cleft of a rock, it fertilizes a fine well-cultivated country, which presents a most striking contrast with the horror inspired by this hideous abyss.

It appears inconceivable how any human beings could ever have thought of fixing their abode in such a place. The path which follows the course of this torrent is cut through the rock; and it is impossible to engage in any conflict there

with safety, unless the heights are entirely commanded at the same time. After having guarded the principal entrance of this savage retreat, by a detachment placed on the top of the only mountain on which a body of troops could be stationed, but which, unfortunately, was a little too far distant; we went down to Orsomarzo to look for provisions, never once imagining that the peasants, whom we had so lately routed, would venture to show themselves again during that day. We found the village quite deserted: everything in it indicated the precipitation with which the inhabitants had fled from their homes. The doors of the greater part of the houses were wide open, and we found in them provisions of every kind.

While we were employed in collecting a stock which should supply us for several days, we heard some shots fired, and at the same instant the surrounding moun-

tains were occupied by a multitude of armed men. The detachment stationed at the entrance of the defile had just been attacked, and obliged to abandon its position, after having many men killed and wounded. At the moment we were advancing to its assistance, it was obliged to turn towards the village with the utmost precipitation. The peasants, who were in close pursuit, had nearly established themselves before us, so as to cut off all escape from this cut-throat abyss, where we were all now crowded together, without any hope of being able to open a passage on that side. The detachment then hastened to the other outlet, where it was received with a shower of stones, and enormous pieces of rock darted down from the top of the mountain. The latter crushed before my eyes two sappers and a drummer. Seeing that we could not encounter our murderous assailants in this

passage, without running the risk of certain destruction, we came to the fixed determination of hazarding everything to rescue ourselves from so dreadful a position. Balls were showered upon us on all sides, and the piercing screams of women sounded horribly in our ears — screams which appeared to us those of the Furies impatiently waiting the moment when they were to feast upon our blood. The drummers immediately beat the charge, and we rushed towards this fatal spot with the energy of despair. The light company having crossed the torrent under a shower of balls, with extreme difficulty climbed up a steep mountain, whence the incessant fire of the insurgents caused us considerable loss; and at length these brave men succeeded in opening a passage, which nothing but the most desperate necessity could render practicable.

The moment we gained the heights,

our soldiers, quite furious, rushed after the insurgents with all the impetuosity of rage. The greater part of them escaped, but a numerous group assembled on the point of a rock were massacred on the spot, or perished by flinging themselves down into the precipices. This unfortunate check, occasioned by the necessity of supplying ourselves with provisions, of which we stood greatly in need at the time, has cost us upwards of sixty men. Many of us have slight wounds and contusions, together with balls which are not yet extracted. But the loss to the insurgents in both these encounters has been much more considerable, and has served to render us still greater objects of terror in their eyes, by shewing them that French intrepidity defies every obstacle, and can extricate itself from the very worst situations.

We marched during a part of the night

on our return to Mormano, before these peasants (the most determined of any we had yet encountered in Calabria) could have time to intercept us. We entered the town to the beat of drum. Our sudden appearance, at a moment when there was a general report that we had been all utterly destroyed, was a thunderbolt to the inhabitants, who, trembling in apprehension of those rigorous measures which we should be perfectly justified in exercising throughout the whole canton, had the boldness and insolent hypocrisy to congratulate us upon our safe return.

This insurrection becoming formidable, the Commandant despatched minute reports of all the particulars necessary to explain the real state of affairs, calling at the same time for reinforcements in order to take military occupation of all the villages; for this is the only way to

reduce them to obedience. In the mean time, he wished to make an attempt upon a town called Laino, which is the great focus of the revolt. In this it was necessary to observe the most profound secrecy. Wanting guides, we obtained them by stratagem, and made them act, though much against their will. Thus prepared, we set out on a very dark night amidst the deepest silence.

Laino lies about twelve miles from Mormano. Arriving there before daylight, we hoped we should be able to surprise a party of insurgents, or at least to carry off as hostages the families of some individuals who have cut a great figure in this revolt. Despite of all the precautions taken to conceal our march, the inhabitants were aware of it; and we found the whole town deserted. Any other attempts with forces so inconsiderable, and in a country where the whole

population was in open rebellion, might compromise our safety, without producing any decisive result. The Commandant, therefore, determined on leaving a garrison of a hundred men at Mormano, the occupation of which was necessary, in order to facilitate the execution of ulterior plans; and we have returned to Castrovillari, where we wait the arrival of reinforcements, which have been urgently demanded. The audacity of the insurgents acquiring fresh boldness by our ceasing to pursue them, turned itself against the company which had charge of the battery of Cirella. Not being able to force this post, which was strongly entrenched, they established themselves in the village that furnished provisions to the company. The Captain who commanded it made a *sortie*, in order to drive them away; but being severely wounded in the thigh with a ball, and many of the soldiers being either

killed or disabled, he was obliged to make a precipitate retreat, fearing he might be surrounded. Blocked in on all sides, separated from Castrovillari by a distance of forty miles, and having no means of making his melancholy situation known, he was in the most critical state. Fortunately, however, there were some fishing-boats placed at the foot of the battery, and these were made use of in providing subsistence for the troops.

We were quite ignorant of what was passing on this point, when, on the afternoon of the 10th of September, a corporal of the company presented himself before me disguised in the garb of a fisherman. He had arrived in safety as if by a miracle, after having wandered for two days and two nights through savage mountains and gloomy forests. Judging from the statement he made that not a moment was to be lost, we set out at once; and

on the following night arrived without any obstruction at Cirella, where we found the troops reduced to the last extremity of distress, and the Captain dangerously ill of his wound, which had not yet been dressed. The company was relieved, and, after remaining two days to see the garrison supplied with the necessary provisions, we returned to Castrovillari.

While we were on our march, two men covered with rags, and whose appearance exhibited the impress of extreme misfortune and suffering, darted forth from a thick wood, and running to meet us exclaimed, "French! French!" They were two grenadiers of the battalion, who, being slightly wounded in the affair of Orsomarzo, and not able to climb the mountain over which we made our escape, had fallen into the hands of the insurgents. They had been eye-witnesses of the horrible massacre of their unfortunate

comrades, and owed their own lives only to their ingenuity, and to an appearance of robust strength, by which they were thought capable of serving as beasts of burden. The wife of the principal chief of the revolt, and his baggage, were placed in a sort of litter, under which these poor fellows were obliged to march, flogged at repeated intervals with the whip, in the same manner as asses are punished. At night they were tied to a tree, expecting every moment the cruel alternative of being shot. Being informed of our arrival, the unhappy men, by efforts almost supernatural, contrived to set themselves free during the night, and succeeded in joining us. According to the intelligence they have brought, it is manifest that the insurgents are in great force, and act under the direction of the English, who supply them with arms, ammunition, and money. Permanent tranquillity can never

be enjoyed in this kingdom, so long as these grand projectors of troubles and revolts shall be suffered to occupy Sicily. We only wait, however, for the first gust of the equinoctial winds to free the Strait; and if our battalion shall not have the honour of being among the foremost to land upon the shores of Sicily, we still hope to arrive time enough to escalade the ramparts of Syracuse.

LETTER XXXVI.

Disembarkation of the Neapolitan Expedition intended for Sicily.—Joachim Murat abandons the Enterprise.—His Return to Naples.—General Reflections upon this Expedition.

Castrovillari, Oct. 1, 1810.

The favourable moment for effecting a descent upon Sicily seems at length to have arrived. The equinox exercising its influence on the Strait, has forced the English vessels to break from their moorings, and re-enter the harbour of Messina. A partial descent performed on the hostile beach without any obstruction, has already pointed out the means of making a general landing. However, contrary to all expectation, the army has just now quitted its positions, the King has returned to Naples, and the expedition stands

indefinitely postponed, without being forced to do so by any disastrous event or considerable check. Since our departure from the camp, the two flotillas have frequently exchanged cannon balls with each other, without any other result than the loss of some men ; and the army has been made to pass the night on board the gun-boats, and land before daylight.

In the mean time the King, wishing to have a closer inspection of the coasts of Sicily, despatched, on the night of the 8th of September, thirty grenadiers of his guard, armed at all points, with orders to land near Messina, surprise a post, and excite alarm in the enemy's camp. This reconnoissance was the prelude to the semblance of a descent upon a general scale.

On the night of the 17th, no English vessel being in sight, orders were given for the whole army to embark. The

King, with his personal Staff, his body guard, and two French divisions, proceeded to the anchorage of Punta-del-Pezzo, where the whole flotilla was now assembled; and the division of Cavagnac embarked at the creek of Pentimella, situated to the south of Reggio, at a distance of eight miles from Punta-del-Pezzo. This division, pursuant to the orders given, set sail at ten o'clock at night, and landed without any impediment at three in the morning at San-Stephano, in Sicily. While this movement, forming part of the general plan, was in progress, the other divisions being unfortunately becalmed, were obliged to wait till a favourable breeze should spring up at Pentimella, where the channel enlarging itself becomes more accessible to the winds. The King, after having in vain waited the whole night for a puff of wind to fill his sails, had the mortification of seeing himself obliged to disem-

bark the troops; and we learned with surprise that the Neapolitan division, which we supposed was equally becalmed with ourselves, had effected a landing on the opposite side. Meanwhile General Cavagnac, who had orders to return if any accident should prevent the other divisions from landing, now finding himself isolated in Sicily, and in danger of being overwhelmed, lost no time in regaining the creek of Pentimella; being obliged, nevertheless, to abandon at San-Stephano three hundred men whom he could not take away for want of boats, the first that reached Sicily having in the darkness of the night returned secretly to Calabria. These three hundred men, surrounded by considerable forces, were obliged to surrender themselves prisoners of war, after having offered the most determined resistance.

Contrary winds might have baffled the

first attempt, but why was not a favourable occasion waited for to make a descent with the whole of our united forces? It is generally believed that Napoleon has never contemplated any serious projects against Sicily, and that his only object has been to cause uneasiness to the English upon this point, in order that he might divert towards it all those land and sea forces which they are collecting in the Mediterranean. He wishes to prevent them from being sent to Spain, and from intercepting our communications with Corfu, at which place considerable reinforcements of men and ammunition have arrived in the course of this summer. This island has become a grand *entrepôt*, which seems to favour the ulterior views of Napoleon upon the Morea. But before the camp was broken up, the King, wishing to shew the English that it was not impossible for him to come to blows

with them in Sicily, landed a body of his own troops there, not choosing, probably, to make so lavish a use of the French corps that are entrusted to his command.

His Majesty embarked on the 26th, at the port of Pizzo, to return to Naples. Compelled by the enemy's cruisers to take refuge for some hours under the battery of Cirella, he has demanded from the Commandant of the station a detailed report of the state of the country. That officer has informed him of the events which have given notoriety to the insurrection of the inhabitants of this canton, and of the ineffectual efforts which we have made to reduce them to obedience. At the close of the conversation, the King, while speaking in terms of high praise of the services which the battalion has rendered in this country, exclaimed, in reference to our affair at Orsomarzo,

"Why did you go down into this cut-throat place? But, what is more, you have come out of it like heroes!" He added, further, that after having now been three years in Calabria, it was high time we should change our quarters. This news, which the Commandant hastened to forward to us, has filled all our hearts with joy. We are, then, in hourly expectation of being ordered to follow the movement of the army which returns to Naples.

LETTER XXXVII.

DEPARTURE FOR NAPLES.—NEW PLANS FOR DESTROYING BRIGANDAGE IN CALABRIA.—GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON THE STATE OF THESE PROVINCES.—CONCLUSION.

CASTROVILLARI, OCT. 19, 1810.

IT would indeed be difficult to express the joy which we have all experienced on receiving the order to set out for Naples on the 22d of this month. Our delight may be imagined, since, after having undergone a long imprisonment as it were, we now find ourselves restored to liberty and happiness. Is it not, in fact, a species of wretched exile, for military men to have been engaged during three long years in a sort of warfare which offers neither glory nor promotion, and leaves nothing in the end but disastrous chances?

Our satisfaction at quitting Calabria is still further enhanced by the extraordinary measures of severity which are now to be resorted to—measures unfortunately rendered necessary by the deplorable situation of the country, but the execution of which will be always repugnant to Frenchmen. It has been clearly proved for a long time back, that notwithstanding all our courage, activity, and perseverance, still we contend with great disadvantage against men born in the country, lightly armed, supported by a part of the population, and accustomed from their infancy to shoot with a deadly aim. These considerations have made the Government resolve upon adopting a new system, according to which the troops are to be only employed in compelling the inhabitants to extirpate the brigands of themselves, under penalty of being regarded as their accomplices and

abettors. For this purpose, ten thousand men are to be spread over the two provinces, and they will have charge of the several communes until a complete pacification takes place. May this measure, notwithstanding the serious inconveniences which it presents, and all the excesses to which private enmities must give rise, still procure a durable tranquillity for this unhappy region, which ignorance and barbarism have so long kept isolated from the rest of Europe! Then the artist and the man of science may traverse it in security, and make other countries intimately acquainted with this most interesting part of the Italian Peninsula. The painter, who travels for the purpose of studying the more sublime works of Nature, will find here situations of surprising beauty and stupendous magnificence; the antiquary will meet with many classical ruins which have hitherto

been unexplored; the botanist will discover plants and shrubs but little known in Europe — in short, Philosophy, investigating those causes which gave rise to the grandeur and prosperity of the ancient Greek colonies, will have ample scope for her meditations, while beholding all around, fertile plains deserted, large towns and villages mouldering in decay, and man sunk down to the lowest pitch of misery and degradation.

THE END.

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